

IGBO MIGRATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND THE CREATION OF THE “IGBO
SCARE” IN BRITISH SOUTHERN CAMEROON, 1900-1975

By

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ABSTRACT

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On May 18, 1916, the newly appointed Governor-General of British Southern Cameroon sent an urgent telegraph to Nigeria seeking 2,000 workers. The memo was sent with such urgency that many District Officers failed to mention the Governor General’s preference for southeasterners—who were tested agriculturalists, and whose populations were overwhelmingly Christian—and Hausa, Yoruba, Ibibio and Igbo men disembarked in large numbers at Victoria. The Hausa were not desired, as they were pastoralists and Muslim; and in 1906, had led the Satiru rebellion against the British. The Secretary of the Southern Province thus worked to recruit an additional 600 Igbo workers and promised to send more. These migrants hailed from Mbaise, the wider Owerri Province, and Calabar Province, which at 1,000 people per square mile was the most densely populated region in West Africa; and competition for land, work, and wages pushed young Igbo men to take part in out-migration beyond the traditional confines of Igboland. British Southern Cameroon, in contrast, was sparsely populated: with 200-300 people per square mile. The initial cohort of 600 Igbo men represented the beginning of a circulatory migration pattern that spanned the history of Southern Cameroon’s amalgamation with Nigeria and would have profound socio-economic and political consequences. My dissertation explores the history of this migration between 1916 and 1975, and expands traditional historical perspectives on masculinity, wage accumulation, and family ties, by showing how these developed among an Igbo population who, while indigenous to Nigeria, became strangers in Southern Cameroon.

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INTRODUCTION

“Igbo Migration, Entrepreneurship, and the Creation of the ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Southern Cameroon 1900-1975” explores the history of Igbo migration between Igboland, situated between the Niger River to the north and the Cross River to the south, and British Southern Cameroon. In doing so, this dissertation expands traditional historical perspectives on masculinity, wage accumulation, entrepreneurship, and family by exploring how these developed among an Igbo population who, while indigenous to Nigeria, became strangers in Southern Cameroon.

In 1916, two factors, the increasing importance of the Igbo men collecting a wage for the colonial state and a youthful labor force in search of work, converged and caused young Igbos to leave their Nigerian homes in search of new economic possibilities in Cameroon. The new Igbo arrivals that year were young in comparison to both other laborers they encountered in Cameroon and to the Nigerian laborers from other locations in the colony. For Igbo youth, the Cameroonian plantation became a space where they developed a new masculine perspective, informed by a combination of their status as strangers in a foreign land, the colonial state’s interpretation of masculinity, and what it meant to be a man within the Igbo worldview. These youth became men as they navigated their new foreign environment, eventually diversifying their roles in Southern Cameroon, no longer working merely as plantation laborers but also as traders and civil servants.

Yet, it was the ongoing presence of young Igbo plantation laborers with excess cash and an entrepreneurial spirit that gave rise to the “Igbo Scare.” Igbos came to be viewed as criminals or, at best, greedy businessmen who would hire their fellow Igbo over a Cameroonian. Exploited during the Eastern Nigeria Crisis of 1953-54, which saw the Nigerian regions attain greater autonomy, Southern Cameroon broke away from eastern Nigeria and became its own self-

governing region.¹ Again in 1961, fears of an “Igbo Scare” drove political support for Southern Cameroon’s secession from Nigeria and subsequent reunification with Cameroun.²

Through a combination of archival material, oral life histories, and newspapers, this dissertation centers the life of Igbo migrants between Eastern Nigeria and British Southern Cameroon. It does more than simply answer the question why men and women left; it explores their dreams, successes, failures, and triumphs. While success was never guaranteed for the Igbo migrants, none of them refused the opportunity to move to “greener pastures.”

Historical Background



Figure 1 :Map: The Bight of Biafra

Prior to the European imposition of artificial borders, communication, shared histories, and trade between Eastern Nigeria and Southern Cameroon were facilitated by the waterways and

¹Atem George, *How Unified is the Republic of Cameroon? The Unification of the Institutions of the Republic of Cameroon since 1961*, (Cameroon: Anucam, 2012), 6.

²Victor Amaazee, “The Igbo Scare in the British Cameroons, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990): 281-293.

footpaths, which linked coastal communities with the interior.³ Coastal communities such as Big Qua Town, Bonny, Rio del Rey, Calabar, Oron, Fernando Po, and Duala were all linked through history or commerce. The Duala, concentrated across the Wuri River and bounded by the Mongo to the west and Pongo to the northwest, were not only important coastal traders but they also established strong trade networks with hinterland communities. Duala, the town, located on the eastern side of the estuary, had come under French administration during the second partition. This arrangement reduced its economic influence in Southern Cameroonian affairs.⁴ The demise of Duala as an economic powerbroker led to the rise of the importance of Victoria, later renamed Limbe after independence.⁵

A history of migration exists between the communities of the Eastern Nigerian/Southern Cameroonian borderlands. According to historian Okon Edet Uya, Oron traditions suggest that long ago Abang left Usahadit, Cameroon, and migrated to the Orons' current location in Calabar, Nigeria. He brought with him the Oron word for white man, *Mbatang*, which had been appropriated from Yaounde via Duala.⁶ For his part, the indigenous Efik historian, Chief (Prince) Francis Edim Imona, recounts the fact that Big Qua Town, located in Calabar, was founded by Ndidem Eta Ntison, who in the 16th century led a "Great Trek" from Mba Akang located in Mamfe, Cameroon, to its present area.⁷ As these examples suggest, oral tradition recounts numerous narratives of migration connecting the interior regions of both Cameroon and Nigeria. These

³Edwin Ardener, *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroon*, (London: International African Institute, 1956), 12.

⁴Ardener, *Coastal Bantu*, 12.

⁵Edwin Ardener, *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon: Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast, 1500-1970*, (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 10.

⁶Okon Edet Uya, *A History of Oron People: Of the Lower Cross River Basin*, (Oron: Manson Publishing Company, 1984), 11.

⁷Chief (Prince) Francis Edim Imona, *Know Your History: A Handbook of a Short History of Big Qua Town, Calabar*, (Calabar: Anieson Printers, 1996), 3.

narratives are important because they show a regional interconnectedness from as far back as humans can remember, thus helping to refocus our contemporary geographical understanding.



Figure 2: Map: Southeastern Nigeria Trade Routes

By 1472, the Portuguese were trading in enslaved Africans and valued commodities from Old Calabar, Bonny, Amba Bay, and Duala, all in the Bight of Biafra.⁸ The vast majority of the enslaved Africans sold from Bonny and Calabar were from Igboland, located in the interior of present-day southeastern Nigeria, though the trade did not begin in earnest until the British asserted

⁸Kenneth Morgan, "The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade From the Bight of Biafra," in *Igbo in the Atlantic World: African Origins and Diasporic Destinations*, eds. Toyin Falola and Raphael Chijioke Njoku, (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2016),

dominance in the 17th century.⁹ Because of the growth of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, trading became more important in the Cross River coastal communities than in the hinterland. Traditionally powerful Igbo markets such as Nri-Awka, Aguku Nri and Awka saw their regional prominence diminish in favor of these coastal trading communities.¹⁰ Thus, Calabar maintained a powerful regional commercial grip after the abolition of the Slave Trade and the introduction of legitimate trade in commodities such as palm oil.¹¹ Cross River and Kwa Iboe River coastal areas were known by various Portuguese names including Angra, Rio de Pariz, Rio de Pero de scinta or Rio de Petro,¹² and these rivers and estuaries remained important spaces for communication, trade, and cultural exchange.¹³

The Ibibio and Ekoi, who lived in interconnected settlements, were some of the oldest Calabar inhabitants.¹⁴ Calabar's location on the Cross River gave it access to the sea and interior. Historian, Monday Noah notes that pre-colonial land routes used for commercial and migration purposes linked Calabar to Okoyong and Cameroon in the east and southeast, respectively.¹⁵ In the 18th century, a community of Ibibios left the mainland for Tom Shot and Parrot Island, located in the Rio de Rel between Cameroon and Nigeria.¹⁶ In the 17th century, British seaman nicknamed the island's leader, Tom Salt, because of the quality of the salt produced there. In local pidgin, the name Tom Salt evolved into Tom Shot; and the Tom Shots, which comprised a series of small

⁹Kenneth Morgan, "The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade From the Bight of Biafra," in *Igbo in the Atlantic World: African Origins and Diasporic Destinations*, eds. Toyin Falola and Raphael Chijioke Njoku, (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2016),

¹⁰G.I. Jones, *The Background of Eastern Nigerian History, Volume. Tribes Distribution (1)*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Human Relations Area Files, 1988), 138.

¹¹Jones, *The Background*, 139.

¹²Monday Efiog Noah, *Old Calabar [circa 1800-1885]: The City States and the Europeans*, diss. (Howard University, 1974), 2

¹³Effiong U. Aye, *Old Calabar Through the Centuries*, (Calabar: Hope Waddell Press, 1967), 16.

¹⁴Noah, *Old Calabar*, 8.

¹⁵Noah, *Old Calabar*, 8.

¹⁶Noah, *Old Calabar*, .

fishing estuaries, remained independent until they were conquered by Duke Ephraim of Old Calabar, a trading partner of Antera Duke, during Duke Town's regional expansion in the 17th century.¹⁷ Since the Tom Shots were controlled by the Qua, the Ibibios were obligated to pay annual tribute. Those who became residents traded in shrimp, shellfish, and clams but became regionally famous for salt.¹⁸

Prior to Duke Town expansion, trade was less monopolized by and controlled between the Qua and Ibibio.¹⁹ The writing of French slave dealer John Barbot in 1698 provides a glimpse into the complexity of pre-colonial trade in the area. As he recounts, he traded with both William King Agbisherea and Robin King Agbisherea from the Ibibio-controlled town of Egbosherry.²⁰ Historian Monday Efiang Noah affirms that Agbisherea was another name for the Ibibio.²¹ These previous examples highlight the already complex levels of interactions among the communities, city-states, and nations along the Cross River, and between Nigeria and Southern Cameroon prior to European colonization.

In the 15th century, the Portuguese became the first Europeans to maintain sustained contact with indigenous coastal communities in the vicinity of what became Southern Cameroon. The Portuguese named this area Rio dos Camaroës (the River of Prawns) after its abundance of this crustacean. Subsequently, the Portuguese established markets at Rio del Rey and Rio dos Camaroës. Amba Bay, which lies to the west of Rio dos Camaroës, was a major trading and rest stop for the Portuguese, Spanish, French, German and British seamen between 1827 and 1849.

¹⁷Aye, *Old Calabar*, 20.

¹⁸Noah, *Old Calabar*, 8-10.

¹⁹Stephen D. Behrendt, A.J.H. Latham and David Northrup, *The Diary of Antera Duke, an Eighteenth Century African Slave Trader*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 53.

²⁰Behrendt, *The Diary of Antera Duke*, 53.

²¹Noah, *Old Calabar*, 11.

Writing in the 18th century, John Barbot described what he witnessed in Southern Cameroon in an area he called Ambozes, later renamed Amba Bay.²² He not only describes the landscape but also provides a brief introduction to the nature of life and trade in the area.²³

By the end of the 16th century, the Dutch replaced the Portuguese as the dominant traders along the coast. Samson, who controlled both Rio del Rey and Moneba and resided in present-day Duala, was a prominent trader during the time the Dutch attempted to assert a sphere of influence.²⁴ In the 18th century, the English first challenged and then surpassed the Dutch for trade dominance.²⁵ Simultaneously, Bimbia, Cameroon, became a powerful slave trading market.²⁶

While Calabar and Bonny depended heavily on enslaved Africans from Igboland, large numbers of enslaved Africans also came from Cameroon's dense interior, also referred to as the Cameroon Grassfields.²⁷ This region, surrounded by lowland rainforests on its western and southern sides, was not only densely populated but it was also topographically diverse, including palm oil, pigs, goats, sheep, dwarf cows, coffee, fowls, iron, and tobacco;²⁸ and its residents produced earthenware and raffia bags. The extent of the Grassfields' bio-diversity created an abundance of goods, and the tightknit self-contained symbiotic communities encouraged neighboring chiefdoms such as Mendankwe, Mankon and Bafut to act as powerful middlemen. In

²²Richard F. Burton, *Abeokuta and The Cameroons Mountains An Exploration, Volume II*, (London: Tinsley Brother, 1863), 237.

²³John Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea and of Ethiopia Interior Volume V*, (London, 1732)

²⁴Shirley G. Ardener, *Eyewitnesses to the Annexation of Cameroon, 1883-1887*, (Buea, West Cameroon, 1968), 6.

²⁵Ardener, *Eyewitness*, 6.

²⁶Ardener, *Eyewitness*, 7.

²⁷Jean-Pierre Warnier, *Cameroon Grassfields Civilization*, (Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing, 2012), 40.

²⁸Warnier, *Cameroon Grassfields*, 41.

the 19th century, internal trade from the Grassfields was linked to long-distance trading posts such as Calabar on the coast and among the Fulani Emirates in the north.²⁹

According to anthropologist Jean-Pierre Warnier, the Cameroon Grassfields comprised several hundred independent communities populated by between 1,000 to 60,000 inhabitants.³⁰ These independent communities stretched the socio-political gambit. The presence of both small and medium-sized communities within such a dense area led to the development of complex social networks built on indigenous diplomatic relations. By the 19th century, large established chiefdoms such as Mendankwe, Bafut, and Mankon created spheres of influence and negotiated treaties to reinforce their power and to protect themselves from foreign incursion.³¹ Similarly, smaller communities, such as Ngkwen, formed confederacies to protect themselves from stronger and more well-armed ones.³² Ngkwen, for example, not only dug trenches around its settlements but also established a confederacy with the larger Mendankwe chiefdom to protect itself from Bafut and Mankon aggression.³³ In addition, Ngkwen offered sanctuary to Mankon refugees, a situation which, in turn, led to Mankon attacking Ngkwen traders. The dispute was settled through a traditional peace treaty, which stipulated the planting of two fig trees and the burying of two dogs. As a consequence, Ngkwen and Mankon agreed to protect each other's trade and traders.³⁴

²⁹Warnier, *Cameroon Grassfields*, 41.

³⁰ Warnier, *Grassfields*, 42.

³¹Paul Nchoji Nkwi, "Traditional Diplomacy, Trade and Warfare in the Nineteenth-Century Western Grassfields," in *Nso and its Neighbours: Readings in the Social History of the Western Grassfields of Cameroon*, eds. B. Chem-Langhee and V.G. Fanzo, (Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing, 2011), 25-26.

³²Nkwi, "Traditional Diplomacy," 25-26.

³³Nkwi, "Traditional Diplomacy," 25-26.

³⁴Nkwi, "Traditional Diplomacy," 28.

Grassfields for chiefdoms to be hostile to near-by competitors and value establishing relationships with distant chiefdoms who posed little immediate economic threat.³⁷

British arrival at Fernando Po and the founding of Victoria, Cameroon

In 1827, the British moved both the Mixed Commissioner Courts and the slave suppression squadron from Sierra Leone to Fernando Po.³⁸ The Mixed Commissioner Courts resulted from bilateral agreements between Britain, Holland, Spain, and Portugal to seize ships and adjudicate slave traders under the latter nations flag.³⁹ Captain W. F. Owen landed in Fernando Po with a group of liberated Africans who established Clarence Town, which later became known as Santa Isabel.⁴⁰ On 1 August 1838, slavery was abolished in the British Caribbean; and from that moment on, British West Indians returned to Africa as missionaries, traders and settlers.⁴¹ The increased population resulting from these freed people coincided with England's support of the 1841 Niger Expedition, which was launched to open land that later became Nigeria for trade, scientific research, and religious conversion.⁴²

The London Baptist Missionary Society sent the English Baptist Minister, Rev. John Clarke, and fellow Englishman Dr. G. K. Prince to Fernando Po, where they intended to join the members of the 1841 Niger Expedition.⁴³ Although the Expedition never arrived, Clarke and Prince nevertheless began evangelizing to the Bubi in Fernando Po. The two men also visited King

³⁷Nkwi, "Traditional Diplomacy," 27

³⁸Robert Brown, "Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leonean Campaign: 1826-1834," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.6, No. 2(1973):249-264

³⁹Robert Brown, "Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leonean Campaign: 1826-1834," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.6, No. 2(1973):249-264

⁴⁰Robert Brown, "Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leonean Campaign: 1826-1834," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.6, No. 2(1973):249-264

⁴¹Robert Brown, "Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leonean Campaign: 1826-1834," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.6, No. 2(1973):249-264

⁴²Robert Brown, "Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leonean Campaign: 1826-1834," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.6, No. 2(1973):249-264

⁴³Ardener, *Eyewitnesses to the Annexation*, 6-7.

William of Bimbia and several Duala Kings on the Cameroon River as well.⁴⁴ These interactions between Clark, Prince and several Cameroonian kings is important because they represent the beginning of a sustained relationship between Cameroonians and the English, one which ultimately led to a mainland settlement.

In 1843 and 1844, Clarke and Prince returned to Fernando Po from Jamaica with a group of assistant missionaries and settlers.⁴⁵ Notable among the group was Jamaican-born, Joseph Merrick, whose grandmother was born in Africa.⁴⁶ By all accounts, once there, the party focused on leaving Fernando Po and permanently settling along the Cameroonian coast. Merrick visited several Duala Kings including William of Bimbia, and he subsequently made important political and social inroads, establishing the Bimbia Baptist Mission, a brick factory and a printing press.⁴⁷ He used the printing press to translate parts of the New Testament into Isubu, the indigenous language of the Bimbia.⁴⁸ In addition, with the blessing of King William, Merrick climbed Mt. Cameroon and made contact with the Bakoko.⁴⁹

It was during this time that the British Missionary, Rev. Alfred Sakar, arrived in Fernando Po.⁵⁰ A few years later in 1858, the Spanish reclaimed Fernando Po and proclaimed Roman Catholicism the island's sole religion, expelling all missionaries and converts.⁵¹ Because of this expulsion Sakar purchased land from King William near Ambas Bay and on 9 June 1858 established Victoria.⁵² The groundwork for the sale had already been laid by Jamaican Rev. Joseph Jackson Fuller, who not only negotiated the agreement with King William but also suggested its

⁴⁴Ardener, *Eyewitnesses to the Annexation*, 6-7.

⁴⁵ Jaap van Slageren, "Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon," *Exchange* 30, 2 (2001): 145-156.

⁴⁶ Jaap van Slageren, "Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon," *Exchange* 30, 2 (2001): 145-156.

⁴⁷ Jaap van Slageren, "Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon," *Exchange* 30, 2 (2001): 145-156.

⁴⁸ Jaap van Slageren, "Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon," *Exchange* 30, 2 (2001): 145-156.

⁴⁹ Ardener, *Eyewitnesses to the Annexation*, 8-9

⁵⁰ Robert Quiver Shindler, *Alfred Sakar: A Missionary Pioneer*, January 15, 1880.

⁵¹ Robert Quiver Shindler, *Alfred Sakar: A Missionary Pioneer*, January 15, 1880.

⁵² Robert Quiver Shindler, *Alfred Sakar: A Missionary Pioneer*, January 15, 1880.

location.⁵³ Rev. Fuller had been a resident at the Bimbia Baptist Mission since Merrick's time. Thus, it was through his hard work and stewardship that Victoria was founded and settled.⁵⁴

The Colonial Era begins in Cameroon

In 1884, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck notified the German press that he was sending the famed German explorer, Dr. Gustav Nachtigal, on a "civilizing mission" to West Africa.⁵⁵ Nachtigal was, in truth, tasked with defeating the British and negotiating treaties that brought Africans under German control.⁵⁶ On July 5 and 6, Nachtigal landed in Bayida and Lomé, and raised the German flag, an action which brought Togoland into the German Empire.⁵⁷ On July 10 the English ship *Goshawk* entered the Cameroon River but mysteriously left the next day. In response, Nachtigal hastily signed treaties with Duala Chiefs Deido, Bell, and Akva bringing Cameroon, now spelled, Kamerun, under German control formally on 14 July 1884.⁵⁸ Britain held Victoria and Rio del Rey until 7 May 1885 when it relinquished its claim to Germany.⁵⁹ In return, Germany relinquished its claim to Forcados and St. Lucia to England.⁶⁰ In addition, the French who had originally laid claim to Great Batanga and Kwakwa-Kriek, Cameroon, seceded them to Germany in exchange for Conakry.⁶¹ Germany, thus, gained full control of Kamerun, though French and British commercial activities remained.

Thus, Igbo migrants, who left Igboland for work and trade between 1917 and 1961 for what had become the British Southern Cameroon, entered a far more stratified world than their own.

⁵³E.B. Underhill, "The Late Rev. Alfred Sakar: The Pioneer of the Cameroons River, Western Africa," *The Sunday Home: A Family Magazine for Sabbath Reading*, December 11, 1880.

⁵⁴Underhill, "The Late Rev. Alfred Sakar"

⁵⁵ Albert F. Calvert, *The Cameroons*, (London: T. Werner Laurie, Ltd, 1917), 2-3.

⁵⁶Calvert, *The Cameroons*, 2.

⁵⁷ Calvert, *The Cameroons*, 2.

⁵⁸ Calvert, *The Cameroons*, 2-3.

⁵⁹Calvert, *The Cameroons*, 2-3.

⁶⁰ Calvert, *The Cameroons*, 2-3.

⁶¹Calvert, *The Cameroons*, 2-3.

Not only was the land ecologically diverse but the language and culture were also drastically different. The absence of German colonialism following World War I (1914-1918) meant the new lingua franca of Southern Cameroon, just as it was in Nigeria, was English. And in the early days, this familiarity with the language facilitated the adjustment of Igbo migrants and their ability to take advantage of their new surroundings. Because of its employment opportunities, Southern Cameroon became a place where Igbo migrants could re-make themselves informed by both the traditional Igbo and the new English forms of masculinity as well as find greater success than they could have in their natal communities.

Literature Review

This dissertation represents an important opportunity to bridge the gulf between Nigerian and Cameroonian historiography. I situate my work between that of Nigerianist and Cameroonianist scholars who, while bound by the colonial defined boundaries of their independent nations, have produced profound scholarship which has informed my work. By marrying both historiographies, my dissertation not only moves beyond codified boundaries to reveal the shared history of Southeastern Nigeria and Southern Cameroon but it also fills an important lacuna in the scholarship on internal African Diasporas. In my dissertation I introduce circulatory out-migration as a framework for understanding the dynamics of the Igbo internal African Diaspora who migrated between southeastern Nigeria and British Southern Cameroon. Here circulatory out-migration is defined as the voluntary movement of Igbo people from the confines of Igboland to Cameroon, primarily as youths, and their return to Nigeria in old age. It is highly dependent on the informal recruitment of nephews, nieces, cousins, sisters and brothers from both paternal and maternal communities. Although this migration allowed Igbo migrants to build homes and reside

in Southern Cameroon for decades, their primary intent remained to return home to their natal communities in order to fully reap the benefits of years of hard work as strangers.

Historian Peter Kilby argues that there were two types of migration—internal and external—that defined colonial Nigeria.⁶² Internal migration was seasonal and, as such, was connected to farming cycles. Seasonal northern Nigerian migration led northern farmers to migrate to western Nigeria as well as Ghana for the cocoa harvest.⁶³ In addition, northern migrants remained in northern Nigeria to work in either the cotton or tin industry while entrepreneurs from these parts conducted trade in the East and French West Africa.⁶⁴ External migration, which involved more permanent movement from outside the confines of the migrant's natal villages, exploded throughout the course of the colonial period and was fueled by the adoption of an English wage economy.⁶⁵ External migration could also be short term, lasting between 6 months to 2 years; this type of migration was common among eastern Nigerian migrants to Fernando Po and British Southern Cameroon.⁶⁶ Annually, upwards of 7,000-9,000 eastern Nigerian laborers were recruited to Fernando Po.⁶⁷ Between 1952-53, there were 25,794 Igbo and 10,300 Ibibio in Southern Cameroon, far exceeding any other Nigerian group.⁶⁸

Kilby rightly argues that the destination of migrants was not relative to population density. Instead, it was intricately tied to the ability to obtain higher wages and the long-term economic

⁶² Kilby, *Industrialization*, 204-205. Kilby notes following about the percentage of Igbo and Ibibio in industries across Nigeria. "Several examples (circa 1960-2) will serve to indicate the importance of easterners in the industrial labour force throughout the Federation: a brewery in Kaduna, 25%; four baking firms in Ibadan, 28%; a timber and plywood plant in Sapele, 55%; a Lagos soap factory, 47%; a brewery in Lagos 52%; the Ebute Metta Railways Workshop, 30%; and the Nigerian Port Authority, 35%.

⁶³ Kilby, *Industrialization*, 204-205

⁶⁴ Kilby, *Industrialization*, 204-205

⁶⁵ Kilby, *Industrialization*, 204-205

⁶⁶ Kilby, *Industrialization*, 204-205

⁶⁷ Kilby, *Industrialization*, 204-205

⁶⁸ Kilby, *Industrialization*, 204-205

opportunities offered by the new space.⁶⁹ For example, Southern Cameroon offered Igbo migrants both immediate economic opportunities and a long-term economic stability that was strong enough to sustain the informal apprenticeships so important to Igbo communities.

While Igbo traders experienced resentment, assaults, and slander for the economic, social and political power they wielded in British Southern Cameroon during the colonial and post-colonial period, Igbos, however, were not the only migrant group that benefited economically and socially from their willingness to migrate. Lebanese, West Indian, Greek, Syrian and Indian immigrants all found economic prosperity in colonial Nigeria.⁷⁰ These populations, while small, wielded significant economic, social and political power.⁷¹

Whether in mines, on plantations or boats, or in the city, the advancement of colonialism spurred transformative shifts in African peoples' social, economic and religious lives. The sheer size of Nigeria and the addition of British Southern Cameroon and British Northern Cameroon make it an interesting space for exploring the dynamics of migration and its impact on laborers and the nation. Important studies in migration have been based on South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Senegal, Congo, and Mozambique.⁷² My dissertation adds to present scholarship on African migration by exploring the generational impact of migration and the evolution of what it means to be an indigene or a stranger.

⁶⁹Kilby, *Industrialization*, 206.

⁷⁰ T. Falola, "Lebanese Traders in Southwestern Nigeria, 1900-1960," *African Affairs*, 89, 357, (1990): 525-

7 T. Falola, "Lebanese Traders in Southwestern Nigeria, 1900-1960," *African Affairs*, 89, 357, (1990): 525-

7 ⁷¹T. Falola, "Lebanese Traders in Southwestern Nigeria, 1900-1960," *African Affairs*, 89, 357, (1990): 525-

7 ⁷² Audrey Richards, *Economic Development and Tribal Change: A Study of Immigrant Labour in Buganda*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); Polly Hill, *Migrant Cocoa Farmers in Southern Ghana*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); Sara Berry, *Cocoa, Custom and Socio-Economic Change in Rural Western Nigeria*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1975); I.R. Phimister and C. van Onselen, *Studies in the History of African Mine Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe*, (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1978).

According to historian Toyin Falola, in the 1890s Lebanese immigrants arrived and entered the cattle trade in Lagos and Kano.⁷³ By the 1940s, these migrants had diversified into importing, exporting, and small-scale manufacturing.⁷⁴ Consequently, they faced a backlash from local business elites and were not allowed into Ijebu-Ode until 1951.⁷⁵ Historian Tom Forrest, also writing on Lebanese migration into Nigeria, asserts that immigrants tended to respond faster to economic change than local traders.⁷⁶ The Lebanese control on trade was curtailed only by the rise of Igbo traders decades later according to historian S. Osoba, who argues that it was only in the 1960s that Igbo traders surpassed Lebanese textile expertise in Ibadan.⁷⁷

The Lebanese were not the only migrants who staked a claim in colonial Nigeria as during the mid-20th century, Indian traders introduced madras cloth and imported electrical goods from Asia, and West Indian immigrants cornered the bakery industry.⁷⁸ In fact, Jamaican A. S. Schackelford was referred to as the “Bread King” in Lagos, Nigeria.⁷⁹

Modern African circular migration can be traced to the Legitimate Trade Era when selling enslaved Africans to Europeans changed to selling crops such as palm oil.⁸⁰ Legitimate trade encouraged the farming of industrial cash-crops, with large multinational corporations such as Unilever controlling the trade.⁸¹ Historian Audrey Richards highlights the effects of circular

⁷³ T. Falola, “Lebanese Traders in Southwestern Nigeria, 1900-1960,” *African Affairs*, 89, 357, (1990): 525-7

⁷⁴ T. Falola, “Lebanese Traders in Southwestern Nigeria, 1900-1960,” *African Affairs*, 89, 357, (1990): 525-7

⁷⁵ T. Falola, “Lebanese Traders in Southwestern Nigeria, 1900-1960,” *African Affairs*, 89, 357, (1990): 525-7

⁷⁶ Tom Forrest, *The Advance of African Capital: The Growth of Nigerian Private Enterprise*, (London: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 22-23

⁷⁷ S. O. Osoba, “The Phenomenon of Labour Migration in the Era of British Rule: A Neglected Aspect of Nigeria’s Social History,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol.4, No.4 (June 1969): 515-538.

⁷⁸ P. Kilby, *African Enterprise: The Nigerian Bread Industry*, (Stanford: Hoover Institute, 1965), 7-8.

⁷⁹ Kilby, *African Enterprise*, 7-8.

⁸⁰ Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 161.

⁸¹ D.K. Fieldhouse, *Unilever Overseas: The Anatomy of a Multinational, 1895-1965*, (London: Croom Helm, 1978)

migration in Buganda, which was propelled by the coffee and cotton industry. In 1948 laborers from Uganda, Sudan, Rwanda, and Tanzania migrated into Buganda to work these plantations.⁸² Hill uncovered a similar impact in Ghana as migrants streamed into the county to farm cocoa.⁸³ Historian Sara Berry's work on the impact of migration in Western Nigeria concludes that migration was propelled by the demands of the cocoa industry;⁸⁴ and historian, Bill Freund writing about Zimbabwe records that it was initially not clear how mine laborers would be recruited by the British government even as mine managers pushed for the institution of forced labor.⁸⁵ In the early 1920s, forced labor was abolished in favor of voluntary. Mine companies supported the government's ability to issue heavier taxation which, in turn, compelled men to work seasonally in the mines.⁸⁶ This labor nexus was better than forced labor because it did not directly challenge or dismantle the agricultural system. Further, this indirect form of labor recruitment allowed laborers themselves to act as informal recruiters which ultimately benefited mining companies.⁸⁷

Historian Reuben Udo explores the plight of Nigerian migrant tenant farmers, and excluding wage-earners, his work nevertheless centers an important form of migration at the village level⁸⁸. Tenant farmers represent rural to rural migration, which often involves relocation for the purpose of cultivating crops.⁸⁹ This form of migration broadens the scope of migration within Nigeria, which often only referenced the rural to urban migration nexus. Udo's work is important because of its focus on this frequently neglected study of internal migration within

⁸²Audrey Richards, *Economic Development and Tribal Change: A Study of Immigrant Labour in Buganda*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973)

⁸³Polly Hill, *Migrant Cocoa Farmers in Southern Ghana*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963)

⁸⁴Sara Berry, *Cocoa, Custom and Socio-Economic Change in Rural Western Nigeria*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1975)

⁸⁵I.R. Phimister and C. van Onselen, *Studies in the History of African Mine Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe*, (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1978).

⁸⁶Freund, *Capital and Labour*, 74-75.

⁸⁷ Freund, *Capital and Labour*, 75.

⁸⁸ Reuben K. Udo, *Migrant Tenant Farmers of Nigeria*, (Lagos: African University Press, 1975), 1.

⁸⁹ Udo, *Migrant Tenant*, 1.

Nigeria, specifically in the rural sector. Tenant farming was drastically different from rural to urban migration because the tenant farmer was often not only using out-of-date farming techniques but was given uninhabited land and prompted to build farms using only the tools available.⁹⁰ Limited largely to the small-scale, tenant farming lacked the mass appeal for many who desired to live in the city.⁹¹ In addition, Udo noted that many tenant farmers came from the Southeast following the Biafran War.⁹²

A controversy that cannot be ignored in this study is the claim that the Igbo in Southern Cameroon were seen as an invasive force who bent the land and people to their nefarious will. Historian Victor Amaazee, who referred to this as the “Igbo Scare,” provided a balanced outline of its development.⁹³ Conversely, historian Anthony Ndi blames the Igbo for what he sees as the underdevelopment of British Southern Cameroon. In his view, the Igbo were “Black Imperialists,” who were worse than the British. Ndi promotes the Kamerun National Democratic Party’s (KNDP) pro-secessionist claim that Southern Cameroon would become an Igbo backyard if it chose to join the Republic of Nigeria rather than return rejoin the Republic of Cameroun at the time of the plebiscite.⁹⁴ I push back against the blanket claim that the Igbos were “Black Imperialists,” and nuance the application of the term “Igbo Scare.” Through the use of oral interviews, archival materials, and newspapers, I add a layered experience of Igbo life in Southern Cameroon by narrating their quotidian experiences. The fear of the Igbo presence was not unique to British Southern Cameroon; instead, it was widespread, and a deep investigation into the totality of the

⁹⁰ Udo, *Migrant Tenant*, 3.

⁹¹ Udo, *Migrant Tenant*, 3.

⁹² Udo, *Migrant Tenant*, 4.

⁹³ Victor Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in the British Cameroons, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol.31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁹⁴ Anthony Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons: Prime Lessons for Cameroon*, (Denver: Spears Media Press, 2016), 79-81

experiences that led to these feelings brings clearly into focus the economic and political anxiety and agitation that formed their backdrop.

At the root of the economic and political agitation were often conflicts related to masculinity and wealth. The fear of Igbo domination in Cameroon was rooted in a fear of Igbo ability to succeed in accumulating wealth, something that historian Ndubueze L. Mbah calls the performance of *ogaranya*.⁹⁵ Igbo male and female or history collaborators reference this ability through reflections on the importance of starting a successful business, which would lead to marriage and family. Embedded in this understanding was the further ability to informally recruit others from maternal and paternal communities. The successful recruiting of others was indicative that a migrant had found economic success in Southern Cameroon.

Studies on wage labor and masculinity by historians Stephan Miescher and Lisa Lindsey have explored the ways in which manhood was not only defined by the colonial state but how African men and women reshaped it to suit their own social and cultural viewpoints.⁹⁶ Wage labor and masculinity have been examined by other scholars, but primarily within the confines of ethnic spaces. In these spaces, migration was minimal as men remained closely connected to their communities.⁹⁷ However, by migrating far distances and becoming strangers, the Igbo men and women of my study accumulated wealth and defined their masculinity in ways that have not been studied previously.

Historian, Sharon Stichter astutely commented that labor migration cannot be fully understood without reference to its function within the household and extended family.⁹⁸ Migration

⁹⁵Ndubueze L. Mbah, *Emergent Masculinities: Gendered Power and Social Change in the Biafran Atlantic Age*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019), 2.

⁹⁶Lisa Lindsay, *Working with Gender: Wage Labor and Social Change in Southwestern Nigeria*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003);

⁹⁷Lydia Lindsay and Stephan Miescher, *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003); Stephan Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005)

⁹⁸Stichter, *Migrant Laborers*, 58.

across Africa had a profound impact on pre-existing political, social and economic structures as migrant labor strengthened the power of junior males who previously were controlled by an elder and used for labor and other means.⁹⁹ This change contributed to a loss of economic and agricultural output from villages. Finally, migration contributed to the growth of urban cities.¹⁰⁰ Over time these urban spaces became important places for migrants focused on making more extended journeys in search of work.¹⁰¹ A migrant from Mbaise could first stop in Owerri before making the journey to Calabar and then finally to Victoria. Igbos and Ibibios never migrated alone but instead journeyed embedded within their village and ethnic identity. Thus, I analyze the experience of migrant families to highlight the generational impact of migration as well as to bring to the forefront how Igbo and Ibibio migrants re-created home in Southern Cameroon.

In Nigerian-born anthropologist Victor Uchendu's study of Igbo social and cultural life in Southeastern Nigeria, he drew attention to the nature of Igbo life and work, developing a three-tier framework of Igbo labor: those who worked within the community, those who worked in Nigeria, and those who worked outside Nigeria.¹⁰² Scholars of Igbo labor history have explored the realities of the first two categories of workers Uchendu developed, but the third category, namely, those Igbo people who worked outside Nigeria, have been far less explored. My project addresses that limitation in that it analyzes the lived experiences of distant Igbo labor migrants during the colonial period. These young Igbo men who journeyed to British Southern Cameroon did so because it offered them consistent wage labor. Moreover, the money they earned allowed them to return home to marry, begin businesses, and, in the long-term, educate their children both in Nigeria and abroad.

⁹⁹ Stichter, *Migrant Laborers*, 58.

¹⁰⁰ Stichter, *Migrant Laborers*, 62.

¹⁰¹ Stichter, *Migrant Laborers*, 63.

¹⁰² Victor Uchendu, *The Igbo of South-East Nigeria*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966.)

Anthropologist Edwin Ardener's 1960 study of the experiences of plantation laborers in British Southern Cameroon referenced both the number of Igbo plantation laborers as well as their young age.¹⁰³ More than any other group of laborers, the Igbo, ranging in age from their late teens to early adulthood, were the youngest.¹⁰⁴ My study extends Ardener's analysis by not only exploring the nature of labor on the plantations but also other forms of work in British Southern Cameroon and in Igboland.

Nigerian and Cameroonian scholars have provided significant insight into the interconnectedness of gender and labor.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the latter have discussed the plebiscite that led to British Southern Cameroon merging with its French counterpart.¹⁰⁶ These studies have been valuable in shedding important light on those respective nations, and my current work extends the latter by introducing the Igbo experience which transcends both spaces. Thus, I extend the West-central Africanist gender and labor scholarship by illuminating the understudied experience of Igbo labor migration between Nigeria and Cameroon.

Igbos left the comfort of their communities in Owerri, Mbaise, Enugu, and Calabar, seeking work to reap social, political and economic rewards on their return. Historian Chima Korieh examines the agricultural, economic and social changes which occurred in Mbaise and the wider Owerri area during the colonial period.¹⁰⁷ I extend this conversation by exploring not only the lived realities of the Mbaise Igbos but also of the Igbos throughout Southeastern Nigeria, who as a result of their migration out of Nigeria, subsequently produced agricultural, economic and social changes in both Cameroon and Nigeria.

¹⁰³Edwin Ardener, *Plantation and Village in Cameroon*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960.)

¹⁰⁴Ardener, *Plantation*

¹⁰⁵Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*. (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005)

¹⁰⁶Anthony Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited, 1950-1972*. (Bamenda: Langaa, 2014).

¹⁰⁷Chima Korieh, *The Land Has Changed: History, Society, and Gender in Colonial Eastern Nigeria*, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2010).

Igbos used the opportunities provided by life in British Southern Cameroon to create new modern diasporic communities that remained deeply connected to their natal homes. Previous work on the Igbo diaspora have operated within the scope of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, examining key Igbo figures such as Olaudah Equiano.¹⁰⁸ The constant movement of Igbos between Nigeria and Southern Cameroon was central in developing a modern Igbo diaspora that has hitherto been unexplored.

Methodology

This dissertation is developed based on a combination of archival materials, newspapers, government reports, and oral interviews. In Nigeria, I relied on archival material obtained from the National Archives-Enugu and the National Archives-Calabar, both of which were instrumental in contextually grounding my research. Both archives hold an extensive amount of information related to British Southern Cameroon. The following questions guided my research: 1) How did Igbo labor transform both Southeastern Nigeria and British Southern Cameroon? 2) How was Igbo masculinity shaped by the social and political factors which worked to transform them into a deep repository for migrant labor? 3) What impact did life as strangers have on the development of the Igbo family as it existed in both British Southern Cameroon and Igboland?

During the colonial era, Enugu was the seat of southeastern political power in Eastern Nigeria and controlled British Southern Cameroon.¹⁰⁹ Thus, much information produced about British Southern Cameroon during the colonial period found its way to Enugu. The Calabar archive, while much smaller than the Enugu archive, equally holds vast historical treasures on

¹⁰⁸Chima Korieh, *Olaudah Equiano and the Igbo World: History, Society and Atlantic Diaspora Connections*, (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2009); Douglas Chambers, *The Igbo Diaspora in the Era of the Slave Trade: An Introductory History*, (Glassboro, NJ: Goldline & Jacobs Publishing, 2014); Toyin Falola and Raphael Chijioke Njoku, eds. *Igbo in the Atlantic World: African Origins and Diasporic Destinations*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Takougang, "The Union des population du Cameroun and its Southern Cameroons Connection," *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* (1996):7-24.

Calabar and Cameroon. Calabar was the primary port of departure for men and women leaving Nigeria. Thus, a great deal of material collected from the Calabar Archive enabled me narrate migration to Rio del Rey and Fernando Po as well as the construction of the Calabar-Mamfe Road, which I address in Chapters II and IV.

I relied heavily on newspapers to illuminate the mundane and quotidian stories that never made the archive. Chapter III relies on the *West African Pilot*, *Southern Nigerian Defender*, *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, and *The Nigerian Eastern Mail* to highlight the experiences of Nigerian Civil Servants in Southern Cameroon, who were the backbone of the state but whose day-to-day lives were often hidden. There was no independent press in Southern Cameroon until after the 1961 plebiscite.¹¹⁰ Thus, the *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star* was the first newspaper to devote a large portion of its coverage to the life, politics, and culture in Southern Cameroon. *The Nigerian Eastern Mail* published by Henshaw Press and based in Calabar was used to provide deeper insight into the construction of the Calabar-Mamfe Road, which I address in Chapter IV.

A consequence of the 1961 plebiscite was that Anglophone Cameroonians had to create many industries for themselves that did not exist earlier. Shortly after secession, Anglophone Cameroonians produced their own press.¹¹¹ I use the *Cameroon Times* in Chapter V to provide insight into the experiences of Igbos and Cameroonians following the Biafran War.

While the Calabar and Enugu archives provided the voice of the laborers through petitions, oral interviews provided the voice of traders and smugglers which rarely make the archive. I collected life-histories and family histories in both Owerri and Mbaise, Nigeria. David Henige

¹¹⁰ Atem George, *How Unified is the Republic of Cameroon? The Unification of the Institutions of the Republic of Cameroon since 1961*, (Cameroon: Anucam, 2012), 6.

¹¹¹ *Cameroon Times*

defines oral history as a valid methodology because people's traditions and memories of the past can be understood as historical texts.¹¹² Africanists have shown that oral testimonies can stand as authoritative accounts of lived experiences, and rumor, gossip, and proverbs are valid historical sources because they preserve how Africans represent their historical experience.¹¹³ The performative nature of oral histories allow the historian to further explore the social production of memory and self as well as subjectivity.¹¹⁴ Oral history enables the historians to delve deeper into learning what happened by filling in gaps which are often omitted from written documents. Thus, oral testimonies inform, contextualize and compliment written material. Histories of entrepreneurs and laborers employed across regions have been lacking largely because archival evidence has either not been preserved out of disinterest or it has been destroyed. I examine the oral testimonies of Igbo men and women in tandem with written documents to shed greater light on their lived experiences which has hitherto been ignored.

Positionality

On the outskirts of Owerri on my way to have the bushmeat I had been searching for two weeks, I reflected on my positionality in the context of my field research, dissertation, and purpose in Nigeria. I was in a car with Uche, my friend and research assistance, and a cabman, who by this time had taken me to a series of interviews and who was the best person to help us find bushmeat.

I am writing and researching about strangers as I myself am a stranger in Nigeria whose strangeness is layered. I am an African-American man who reminds every one of their brother, cousin, uncle or friends because of my complexion and build. I look like an Emeka, something

¹¹²David Henige, "Oral Tradition as Means of Reconstructing the Past," in John Phillips, eds. *Writing African History*, (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2005)

¹¹³Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study of Historical Methodology*, (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965)

¹¹⁴Barbara Cooper, "Oral Sources and the Challenge of African History," in John Phillips, eds. *Writing African History*, (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2005)

that I have been told on numerous occasions. I was first given the name Emeka while studying Igbo at Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education in the summer of 2015. I was not in search of an African name when I arrived in Owerri, and I did not want to travel to Nigeria and live out the African American trope of being renamed and welcomed “home” with open arms. I was focused on improving my Igbo and trying as much food as possible.

I became fascinated by the deliciousness of the moi-moi that I first had in the Alvan Ikoku Café. Moi-Moi is a steamed bean pudding made from crushed and deskinced black-eyed peas with a whole boiled egg or smoked fish typically in the center. It reminded me of the black-eyed pea dishes I had in North Carolina, and while the presentation was different, it was a taste I knew. I became intensely focused on understanding its layered taste and situating it within the cuisine of the African Diaspora I grew up eating. I wanted to understand how it came into its current state, what it once was and how I could bring it home. It was within this nexus, during one of our daily walks to the café, that I was given the name Emeka because I looked like and had the face of an Emeka.

My appearance is secondary to my accent as many Nigerians struggled to understand me because of my southern dialect. My appearance allows me to blend into Igbo society, to walk down a street or through a market without being viewed as a stranger. Simultaneously, my ability to blend into Igbo society generates an element of power that I feel will forever remain alien to me because it has not been my experience in America. I have come to the realization that this power for many reasons, none that I created nor could control, yet passively benefit from, was given to me from a space within Nigerians self-image which implies I have more power than I actually do.

My power is embedded in my Americanness, a power afforded me that was alien to me until I arrived in Nigeria. I felt it the moment I made it through the dim labyrinth of the Murtala

Muhammad Airport. It had been alien to me in the U.S. because power is not easily attainable for me there. My newfound “Nigerian” power created an initial imbalance in my interacting with Nigerians and made forming friendships challenging. It is fully because of my experience in America that I did all I could in conversations to remove the myth of what America represents from the minds of those I met. I learned that the shining city on the hill still has a deep hold on the minds of many.

I was asked to qualify more often why I was in Nigeria than I was asked to explain why I was studying African history. “Why are you here?” This question was not out of malice to imply that I do not belong; it assumes that no one wants to be in Nigeria. I must admit that I have never met a Nigerian who has not admitted to me that they wanted desperately to leave, to live in America, Britain, Malaysia, Australia, Germany, Greece, or Canada. I have found that many people have a fetish for America and Europe that as an African American I view as unhealthy. It is because I am African American that I try my best to convey to my Nigerian friends the reality of life in America, that it is not the “land of milk and honey,” that struggle is universal and that the land and resources they have at their fingertips is what other countries desire.

Still, I was asked, “Why are you here?” That I was there for research always drew questions of why I would choose Nigeria I wish more people asked “why do you study African or Nigerian history?” This question is layered, and I admit when it was asked of me, I replied with a question, “would you ask this to a white person?”

But I must reflect on why I chose to study African history. The complete answer is complex and matures as I do as a person and a scholar. I am a citizen of the African Diaspora and a historian. I have always been obsessed with history, engaged in historical documentaries to the point that I preferred them as gifts. I have always found that the discovery of new information provides

euphoric liberation. African history is world history, it is my history and yet so often it is presented in through the prism of Africa as the “Dark Continent.” My journey to pursue a Ph.D. in African history began as an undergraduate at North Carolina Central University where I studied it selfishly because it was mentally liberating to look at Africa in a new fashion. I teach African history because I have seen the look on students' faces when African history and the African Diaspora are presented from an African-centered perspective. In many circles, it is an anomaly to see an African American teaching African history. Through my research and teaching, I bring my perspectives as a historian grounded in African American history, African Diaspora history and African history. I am deeply passionate about teaching because of the impact it has on students. I recall when I taught American History I in a high school through an African-centered lens, which led a student on the first day to ask me, “Mr. Blackwell, we gonna learn about black people every day?” I replied, “Yes, is that a problem?” It was not a rude question but intended to gauge my commitment to my approach, to inquire if I was how I presented myself.

While this dissertation is mine, it would not have been possible without the selfless help of others. I first arrived in Nigeria in the summer of 2015 to study Igbo at the Alvan Ikoku Federal College. I was able to take classes through the language program established by Professor Chima Korieh. I stayed in New Owerri at his Pater Noster Primary School. It was not my intention to dive headlong into research at the time; however, my first experience in Owerri and the relationships I established were maintained and proved invaluable throughout every stage of this research.

Professor Korieh is from Mbaise, and when we discussed my dissertation project, he informed me that several men and women from his village had, in fact, lived and worked in Southern Cameroon. Thus, on my first Nigeria trip, I was able to speak and interact with men who became central in framing the development of this dissertation. Moreover, it was during this trip

that I met and became close friends with Professor Korieh's nephew Uche, who made contact with and set up a series of interviews for me throughout Owerri and Mbaise. In Owerri, Uche and I would unpack recently collected interviews over Hero or Star beers or palm wine. Unpacking the interviews and transcribing them afterward allowed me to situate my interviews almost immediately into my dissertation. Thus, while this dissertation is mine, it really is a product of a series of relationships, and without the relationships that I was able to build and maintain, this dissertation would not have taken its current form.

Movement has always interested me. In a deeper sense, it has interested me because it is rooted in my personality. I am fascinated by why people move because I am constantly on the move myself, not simply for the sake of moving, but in pursuit of what I could not obtain where I was. I am at Michigan State University solely to earn my Ph.D. and teach and research with greater latitude and freedom than I could find elsewhere.

I am fascinated by land because land is power, the ownership, the use, and the capitalization of land. Land is what I want; to reap from the land what I give the land is deeply important to me. That movement and land have converged in my research is not by accident, nor is it fully by design. But it has remained as this project has grown from an idea into tangible pages.

Chapter Breakdown

This dissertation is divided into five chronological chapters that investigate and narrate the history of Igbo migration between Eastern Nigeria and British Southern Cameroon between 1900 and 1975. In doing so, it chronicles the breadth of the Igbo experience in both Nigeria and Southern Cameroon. Pushing beyond simply why Igbos left, this dissertation delves into what the experiences of living meant, and the generational impact migration had on individuals, families and the regions of Southeastern Nigeria and British Southern Cameroon. Moreover, this

dissertation nuances the inaccurate claim that the Igbo were “Black Imperialists.” Through a quotidian interpretation of the experience of Igbo migration, this dissertation shows that Igbos did not migrate with the malice intent to colonize an area. They left as all migrants do, in search of a better life for themselves and their families. This dissertation unpacks the fear of Igbo migrants in British Southern Cameroon and across Nigeria at the time of independence by placing it within its proper political context.

Chapter I chronicles how both German and British colonial administrations addressed the labor question. The labor question was initially German and subsequently British attempts to find a sustainable population of laborers who would ensure the effective and efficient management of plantations. These plantations, initiated in the German era, eroded indigenous land rights because they occupied the most fertile areas. In response to the encroachment of plantations, indigenous communities were relegated to reservations, with the German officials believing that these reservations would supply a continuous pool of receptive Cameroonian laborers. This, however, was not the case. Communities on the reservations did not warmly accept plantation labor, and additionally, their populations were not numerous enough to staff industrial plantations. The inability of the plantations to find a stable reservoir of willing laborers gave rise to the labor question. It was common in the German era for laborers to not only be recruited from what would become French Cameroun but also Togo, and Liberia. I argue that by 1930 the British came to the realization that the proximity and population of Nigeria, specifically Eastern Nigeria, made it a prime location for addressing the labor question.

Chapter II presents the diverging paths available for Igbo migrants, either legal/illegal labor migration to Fernando Po or legal migration to British Southern Cameroon. Through an analysis of Tom Shot fishing towns located in the Rio del Rey, I nuance the question of who was and was

not considered a stranger. Colonial driven investigations in Tom Shots were largely concerned with finding the best mode of collecting taxes, eventually placing them under Native Authority. The collection of taxes created issues between migrants and the indigenous community that did not exist earlier. I argue that the decline of illegal labor in Fernando Po coupled with the expansion of banana production made Southern Cameroon the prime destination for Igbo men from the Owerri Province.

Chapter III takes a quotidian approach into the lives of Civil Servants in British Southern Cameroon as well as the UAC labor protests. Civil servants, who transferred from Ogidi, Owerri, Okigwe, Asaba, Calabar, Onitsha, and Lagos, Nigeria, making new homes in places such as Tiko, Kumba, Victoria, and Buea, Cameroon, used the Provincial News section in the *West African Pilot* to remain in contact with one another and their families. In its pages they celebrated births, marriages, deaths, promotions, and community outreach as well as the arrival and departure of friends and newcomers. I push back against the notion promoted by Southern Cameroonian secessionists that Igbo strangers were stereotypically self-centered and money-hungry and highlight how colonial mismanagement of the stranger question contributed to regionalism, stranger anxiety and ultimately the 1953 Eastern House Crisis, which politically divided Eastern Nigeria and set in motion the 1961 Plebiscite.

Chapter IV chronicles the construction of the Calabar-Mamfe Road and the experiences of the Kwa Falls Settlers, comprised of Igbo and Ibibio men and women. In doing so, this chapter expands the experiences of Igbos beyond the confines of CDC and UAC plantations. I document the struggles laborers and settlers endured to organize unions, the threat that organized labor introduced into their lives and the ways in which laborers advocated to be heard in a world moving, albeit slowly, closer to independence.

Chapter V investigates the experiences of Igbo traders in British Southern Cameroon from 1955 to 1975. As traders, craftsmen, shoemakers, tailors, transporters, bicycle repairer men and fishermen, Igbos were a formidable Southern Cameroonian mercantile class. Multinational trading firms such as the United Africa Company and John Holt, Ltd., resigned themselves principally to the wholesale of goods in Tiko and Victoria, creating space for Igbo traders to monopolize the bulk of the internal trade. Igbo traders extended their economic dominance because of their ability to operate in two and at times three markets—Nigeria, Southern Cameroon and Francophone Cameroun. I explore how Igbo communities transitioned from despised stranger to refugee as a consequence of the Biafran Civil War and finally Biafran, all in the search for an improved quality of life.

The conclusion weaves the narratives of the previous chapters and dissertation questions together. It offers insight into Southeastern Nigeria following 1975 and highlights the continuation of Igbo migration to West Cameroon as well as factors in both Cameroon and Nigeria that have both sustained and at times curtailed migration. Igbo migration between Southern Cameroon continues today, and only recently with the Ambazonia war of independence has Igbo migration and residency been significantly challenged.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵Cameroon Teachers, Lawyers Strike in Battle for English,” 5 December 2016, *Aljazeera News*, aljazeera.com, [accessed 5 December 2016].

CHAPTER 1:
**GERMAN KAMERUN, THE LABOR QUESTION AND THE FORMATION OF BRITISH
SOUTHERN CAMEROON, 1900-1930**

Kamerun was a German colony from 1885-1914 measuring 191,000 miles and boasting a population of 3,500,000.¹¹⁶ The plantation was its defining feature for the entirety of its colonial history. In the 1880s, “425 Europeans, and of these only 348 German,”¹¹⁷ plantation managers, traders, soldiers and missionaries who lived and worked in Kamerun were situated along the coast. Through treaties, the German firms reluctantly dealt with Duala middlemen, who came from a community located on both sides of the Wuri River, bordered by the Mongo River to the West and the Pongo River to the Northwest.¹¹⁸ Duala was a powerful coastal community, a capital city of prominence, and an economic hub.

¹¹⁶ John George. “Enquirer Review of Current Topics: Colonial Governments of To-Day,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, April. 16, 1901.

¹¹⁷ John George. “Enquirer Review of Current Topics: Colonial Governments of To-Day,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, April. 16, 1901.

¹¹⁸ Edwin Ardener, *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*, (London: International African Institute, 1956), 12.



Figure 4: Map: German Kamerun

The German firms used plantations to circumnavigate the economic position of these Duala middlemen.¹¹⁹ In 1885, a joint venture between two private German firms, Woermann and Jantzen & Thormählen, led to the establishment of the first plantations in Kamerun.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Ardener, *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*, 12.

¹²⁰ Ardener, *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*, 12.

A decade, however, would pass before the plantation scheme attained significant traction. Max Esser, the manager of the West African Plantation Company, Victoria (WAPV), arrived in 1896 envisioning a grand plantation scheme stretching from the Kamerunian coast to its interior.¹²¹ Esser's vision of sweeping industrial plantations was not uncommon. On 10 June 1896 the German Reichstag passed the All-Highest Decree, allowing firms to classify occupied African lands as ownerless. Passage of this Decree allowed firms to supersede existing treaties and work around the Duala middlemen.¹²²

Plantations usurped indigenous Kamerunian land rights, occupying the most fertile land, and as a consequence, relegating Kamerunian communities to colonial-determined reservations.¹²³ The German expectation was that these reservations would ensure a continuous pool of receptive African laborers.¹²⁴ This was, however, not the case. Kamerunian communities residing on the reservations did not warmly accept plantation labor. In addition, the Kamerunian population was not numerous enough to staff these industrial plantations.¹²⁵ This inability of the plantations managers to find a stable reservoir of willing Kamerunian laborers gave rise to the labor question, which reflected German inability to secure a sustainable work force for the existing plantations. While there was an expansive growth of plantations during the German era, this labor question

¹²¹ E.M. Chilver and Ute Röschenthaler, eds. *Cameroons Tycoon: Max Esser's Expedition and its Consequences*, (New York: Berghahn Book, 2001), 15-16.

¹²² Chilver, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 15-16.

¹²³ Richard A. Goodridge, "In the Most Effective Manner?": Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277

¹²⁴ Richard A. Goodridge, "In the Most Effective Manner?": Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277

¹²⁵ Author Unknown, *Victoria: Southern Cameroons, 1858-1958*, (London: Spottiswoode, Ballantyne & Co. Ltd, 1958), 20.

dogged the German colonialists until their Kamerunian tenure came to an end following World War I.¹²⁶

In 1916, the British and French repartitioned Kamerun between them. It was after this partition that the British changed the spelling of Kamerun to Cameroon, and the French to Cameroun. The British, who were keenly interested in the growth of plantations in British Southern Cameroon, had actually tracked this growth when it was under German control. To increase the number of plantations, the British used their intelligence and corporate entities to seize the most of the fertile Cameroonian land.¹²⁷ While France actually seized the largest share in terms of landmass and incorporated it into French West Africa, Britain claimed two areas of Cameroon: British Southern Cameroon and British Northern Cameroon.¹²⁸ British officials viewed the plantations as the primary method through which British currency, culture, and wage economy could be introduced.¹²⁹

However, the labor question, a concern throughout the German (1885-1916) colonization, remained during the British era (1916-1960) because plantations were unable to grow without a stable source of labor. Thus, early British control (1916-1930) was marked by how the administration dealt with this issue as well as how it sought to address the consequences of prior German colonial atrocities. Chronicling how German and British colonial administrations addressed the labor question, this chapter argues that by 1930, British officials came to the

¹²⁶Richard A. Goodridge, "In the Most Effective Manner?": Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277; Author Unknown, *Victoria: Southern Cameroons, 1858-1958*, (London: Spottiswoode, Ballantyne & Co. Ltd, 1958), 20.

¹²⁷ Richard A. Goodridge, "In the Most Effective Manner?": Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277

¹²⁸ Richard A. Goodridge, "In the Most Effective Manner?": Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277

¹²⁹ Richard A. Goodridge, "In the Most Effective Manner?": Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277

realization that both the proximity and size of Nigeria made it a prime location for recruiting labor, thus finally finding a solution to the nagging labor question.¹³⁰

German Plantation Labor

For six days beginning on 15 December 1893, the Victoria Government House in Kamerun was occupied by “100 [individuals] with 60 of them being native [Kamerunian] soldiers, and the remaining 40 women carrying firearms”¹³¹ in protest against the abuse of Kamerunian plantation workers. Over the course of the six-day siege, the Victoria Government House was fortified with cannons and rifles. On the sixth day, the “gunboat Hayaene arrived off the coast” to end the siege.¹³² The Kamerunian occupiers engaged in a fierce battle against a detachment of German marines and sailors. During the battle, five Kamerunian and six Germans lost their lives. Four Kamerunians were captured, while the rest managed to flee into the interior. Those captured were executed at the gallows.¹³³ The siege of the Victoria Government House was a reminder to the Germans that the colonized would not go quietly into the night. Further, it was a reminder that even prized African soldiers, whom the Germans depended on for order in their colony, had their breaking point. Thus, the Germans were forced to look elsewhere in West Africa for dependable labor, and neighboring Dahomey seemed like a plausible solution.¹³⁴ However, the Germans soon faced issues around this choice.

¹³⁰Permanent British settlements were set up by Baptist missionaries in 1845 near Duala. The British missionary Alfred Sakar bought land from the King of Bimbila and founded Victoria on the Cameroonian coast.

¹³¹Author Unknown, “The Mutiny at the Cameroons: The German Government House Held for Six Days by the Mutineers,” *New York Times*, December 31, 1893.

¹³²Author Unknown, “The Mutiny at the Cameroons: The German Government House Held for Six Days by the Mutineers,” *New York Times*, December 31, 1893.

¹³³Author Unknown, “The Mutiny at the Cameroons: The German Government House Held for Six Days by the Mutineers,” *New York Times*, December 31, 1893

¹³⁴Author Unknown, “The Mutiny at the Cameroons: The German Government House Held for Six Days by the Mutineers,” *New York Times*, December 31, 1893

In February 1894, Heinrich Leist, the Chancellor of German Kamerun, commenting on the discontentment and hardship that Dahomeans were experiencing in colonial Kamerun remarked:

Much discontent exists among the Dahomeyans because they have not received pay. They arrived after suffering severe hardship and their care and sustenance entailed a heavy outlay. Regarding flogging the wives of native policemen, the report states that the women were punished for working in a slovenly manner. The number of lashes given ranged from five to ten.¹³⁵

This discontent metamorphosed into a scandalous corruption case that embarrassed the Reichstag. Dahomean soldiers had worked for five years without adequate pay. Consequently, the soldiers' wives had to engage in prostitution to make ends meet. Leist and his friends enjoyed these women's sexual and gardening labors. This situation, however, was exposed when the Dahomeans refused to continue working. The exposure led to brutal reprisals: Leist ordered Dahomean soldiers to stand in formation while their wives were stripped and beaten.¹³⁶ In response, the Dahomean soldiers launched an attempt on Leist's life, which failed. In the end, the soldiers who did not manage to escape were hanged, and their wives were sentenced to hard labor.¹³⁷

Similar to the experience of the Dahomeans, German labor demands drained the Kamerunian population, sparing neither men nor women for plantation labor.¹³⁸ In Victoria near Mount Kamerun, plantations were in an area prone to deadly outbreaks of malaria. In addition, laborers in both the interior and other German colonies lived and worked under conditions that led to large numbers of fatalities as workers could fall victim to disease or flogging from overseers.

¹³⁵ Author Unknown, "The Cameroons: The German Chancellor Admits that Native Women were Flogged," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1894.

¹³⁶ Author Unknown, "The Cameroons: The German Chancellor Admits that Native Women were Flogged," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1894

¹³⁷ David Simo, "Colonization and Modernization: The Legal Foundation of the Colonial Enterprise; A Case Study of German Colonization in Cameroon," in *Germany's Colonial Past*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 104-105.

¹³⁸ Simo, "Colonization and Modernization," 105.

¹³⁹ Private firms operated with near impunity, and the maltreatment of the Kamerunians led to a series of rebellions throughout the German era.¹⁴⁰ Firms and merchants supported the growth of plantations because the more plantations, the more they could control the movement of the indigenous people.¹⁴¹ However, each time a portion of Kamerun rebelled, the merchants and firms were unable to conduct business.

Many of the plantations were located near the coast in areas that were historically sparsely populated. During the Slave Trade and Legitimate Trade eras, Duala coastal communities operated as middlemen between the hinterland and the coastal Europeans.¹⁴² Trading in enslaved Africans and hinterland commodities became a defining feature of these coastal communities.¹⁴³ However the advantages provided by trade did not mean that coastal Kamerunians were supportive of the wage economy.¹⁴⁴ The Kamerunian coast offered fertile land, but the interior offered a suitable labor class. Thus, in 1896, Esser in the company of the German explorer, Dr. Eugen Zintgraff, signed a treaty with Fon [King] Galega I of Bali of the Grassfields¹⁴⁵ to supply plantation labor. As a result, Esser returned with 100 Bali men.

Bali laborers, however, found it difficult to adjust to the demands of plantation work.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the cost of transporting men from the interior to the coast made reliance on labor from the interior unfeasible. As the Germans moved deeper into the interior, they turned their attention

¹³⁹ Simon Joseph Epale, *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon, 1885-1975*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1985), 24-25

¹⁴⁰ Epale, *Plantations*, 25.

¹⁴¹ Ralph Austen, *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers: The Duala and their Hinterland, c.1600-1960*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

¹⁴² Austen, *Middlemen*

¹⁴³ Austen, *Middlemen*

¹⁴⁴ Jean-Pierre Warnier, *Cameroon Grassfields Civilization*, (Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing, 2012), 64.

¹⁴⁵ Shirley G. Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses to the Annexation of Cameroon, 1883-1887*, (Buea, West Cameroon, 1968), 6.

to Grassfields communities to address the labor question.¹⁴⁶ As the German railway expanded, so did attempts to persuade laborers to come to the coast. These laborers were recruited with methods that increasingly became heavy-handed and aggressive. Illness such as malaria, malnutrition, yellow fever, tuberculosis, and leprosy spread with increasing frequency and severity, making laborers unwilling to work on the plantations along the coast.¹⁴⁷

Through the late 19th and early 20th century, cocoa was the primary crop in Kamerun.¹⁴⁸ In 1900, Kamerunian cocoa plantations collectively brought in an estimated £15,600, with expectations of continuous growth.¹⁴⁹ The British, through their trading houses, watched the developments in Kamerun, and by 1899, thirty-six Englishmen lived and worked in Kamerun.¹⁵⁰

In the same year, a government report described the state of the labor crisis in Kamerun as follows:

All the southern and western slopes of the mountains are studded with plantations, on which about 4,000 laborers are employed against 2,000 last year [with] 3,000 of these [being] natives of the colony. About 150 laborers were imported from Togoland by state aid, and a hope is expressed that laborers from the colony will by degrees take the place of the Liberian labor which has had to be imported hitherto.¹⁵¹

Migrant labor was a necessity because nearby communities did not have the required numbers of workers to maintain the plantations. From German Togo, Togolese men were recruited, while

¹⁴⁶Epale, *Plantations*, 50.

¹⁴⁷ Epale, *Plantations and Development*, 50-51

¹⁴⁸1900 [Cd.2] [Cd.353] Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Subjects of Commercial and General Interest (Strikes and Disturbances in France and Belgium) [Full version] Page images 282-331 of 720.

¹⁴⁹1900 [Cd.2] [Cd.353] Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Subjects of Commercial and General Interest (Strikes and Disturbances in France and Belgium) [Full version] Page images 282-331 of 720.

¹⁵⁰1900 [Cd.2] [Cd.353] Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Subjects of Commercial and General Interest (Strikes and Disturbances in France and Belgium) [Full version] Page images 282-331 of 720.

¹⁵¹1900 [Cd.2] [Cd.353] Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Subjects of Commercial and General Interest (Strikes and Disturbances in France and Belgium) [Full version] Page images 282-331 of 720.

Liberians were recruited through the actions of German firms that had invested heavily in the independent African nation.¹⁵² By 1900, “at least 6,000 laborers were needed”¹⁵³ for the Kamerunian planting and harvesting season. As more land was cleared to make room for plantations, the number of men needed to work them continued to increase.

Bali, Bakweri and Issangeli, surrounded the plantations but did not have the population needed to adequately meet labor demands. Thus, from the 1890s until 1916 Kamerunian plantations were worked by a series of expanding communities of migrants who were recognized as strangers, that is Africans who were foreign-born and lived and worked outside their natal community.¹⁵⁴

In 1900, three new firms brought “the total [of Kamerunian plantations] up to 19 in all, of which 11 [were] German and 8 English.”¹⁵⁵ Firms depended on local networks for products which had not reached maturity on the increasing number of plantations. The Duala sold goods such as “rubber, ivory, and palm oil [which were] the most important articles of native trade.”¹⁵⁶ While firms purchased rubber and palm oil from the Duala, the quality of these natural products were not always high enough to bring a good price on the international market. As a result of the demands of private trading firms, by the beginning of the 20th century, the supply of rubber and

¹⁵²1900 [Cd.2] [Cd.353] Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Subjects of Commercial and General Interest (Strikes and Disturbances in France and Belgium) [Full version] Page images 282-331 of 720.

¹⁵³1900 [Cd.2] [Cd.353] Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Subjects of Commercial and General Interest (Strikes and Disturbances in France and Belgium) [Full version] Page images 282-331 of 720.

¹⁵⁴1900 [Cd.2] [Cd.353] Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Subjects of Commercial and General Interest (Strikes and Disturbances in France and Belgium) [Full version] Page images 282-331 of 720.

¹⁵⁵1900 [Cd.2] [Cd.353] Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Subjects of Commercial and General Interest (Strikes and Disturbances in France and Belgium) [Full version] Page images 282-331 of 720

¹⁵⁶1900 [Cd.2] [Cd.353] Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Subjects of Commercial and General Interest (Strikes and Disturbances in France and Belgium) [Full version] Page images 282-331 of 720

ivory in Kamerun had declined.¹⁵⁷ This decline shifted the focus of the firms from solely dealing with Kamerun middlemen who brokered the sale of these goods to the establishment of industrial plantations.¹⁵⁸ This change meant that the demand for labor on the plantations increased. Thus, the ability of local traders to trade in wild rubber, palm oil, and cocoa steadily declined. Over time the natural crops traded by middlemen to private firms were replaced with products produced on industrial plantations under modern scientific supervision designed to produce a product coveted by international markets.¹⁵⁹

Three interwoven entities—the colonial government, the plantation industry, and trading firms—coalesced as the largest employers.¹⁶⁰ The Kamerun government used laborers to build roads, railroads, and other infrastructure projects.¹⁶¹ The plantation industry used laborers to clear land, then plant, and harvest crops. Trading firms used laborers to transport natural crops and goods from the interior to the coast.¹⁶² This power structure both commodified and pulled the Kamerunian population in three competing directions.

British government reports indicate that 80,000 carriers were employed by private rubber traders along the Kribi-Yaounde road. Privately owned plantations near Victoria relied on forced labor to clear and cultivate land, while the state used forced labor on roads and railways.¹⁶³ Forced labor, locally branded as recruiting, was so aggressive that Kamerunian villagers became unable

¹⁵⁷1900 [Cd.2] [Cd.353] Reports from H.M. Diplomatic and Consular Officers Abroad on Subjects of Commercial and General Interest (Strikes and Disturbances in France and Belgium) [Full version] Page images 282-331 of 720.

¹⁵⁸1902 [Cd. 786] Annual series of trade reports, serial no. 2696 to 2922 (Trade. Navigation. Shipping: Annual and miscellaneous series (foreign countries)) [Full version] Page images 1939-1945 of 5391

¹⁵⁹1902 [Cd. 786] Annual series of trade reports, serial no. 2696 to 2922 (Trade. Navigation. Shipping: Annual and miscellaneous series (foreign countries)) [Full version] Page images 1939-1945 of 5391

¹⁶⁰ 1902 [Cd. 786] Annual series of trade reports, serial no. 2696 to 2922 (Trade. Navigation. Shipping: Annual and miscellaneous series (foreign countries)) [Full version] Page images 1939-1945 of 5391

¹⁶¹Harry Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism, 1884-1914*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 316

¹⁶²Rubin, *Germans in the Cameroons*, 317.

¹⁶³1922 [Cmd. 1647] West Africa. Reports on the British sphere of the Cameroons. House of Commons Parliamentary Papers.

to maintain their own farms.¹⁶⁴ Under the severe pressure caused by recruiting, a community in Ossidinge District located across the Cross River fled across the border to Nigeria.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, victims of recruiting experienced poor and dangerous working conditions. Plantations near Misellele at the mouth of the Cameroon River, for instance, recorded a twenty-six percent death rate.¹⁶⁶

Because of recruiting and other abuses, in the rainy season of 1900, the communities along the length of the Mungo River united in revolt.¹⁶⁷ As reported in the *Courier-Journal* on 4 April 1900, “everywhere the villages are deserted, and the planters find it impossible to get workers. Most of the workers from the hinterland have fled, including the Balis and the Wels.”¹⁶⁸ Around Mt. Cameroon, the cultivation of 25,000 hectares, principally of cocoa, was under threat and work came to a complete stop.¹⁶⁹ Though the rebellion was eventually suppressed by German forces, much like the occupation of the Victoria Government House, their presence and abuses would not be submissively tolerated. Moreover, the rebellious actions of the Kamerunians affirmed that both the treatment and acquisition of labor needed to change, or Kamerun would exist in a permanent state of uproar.

It became increasingly routine at the beginning of the 20th century for German politicians to speak out against the rape, murder, recruiting and other atrocities that were taking place in Germany's colonies. This situation was particularly true of the Herero Genocide in German South-

¹⁶⁴Epale, *Plantations*, 50.

¹⁶⁵Epale, *Plantations and Development* 50-51. Ossidinge Division was renamed Mamfe Division once British Southern Cameroon became a Trust Territory.

¹⁶⁶Epale, *Plantations and Development* 50-51.

¹⁶⁷Author Unknown, “German Cameroons: In Serious Condition Owing to the Revolt,” *Courier-Journal*, April 4, 1900.

¹⁶⁸Author Unknown, “German Cameroons: In Serious Condition Owing to the Revolt,” *Courier-Journal*, April 4, 1900.

¹⁶⁹Author Unknown, “German Cameroons: In Serious Condition Owing to the Revolt,” *Courier-Journal*, April 4, 1900.

West Africa.¹⁷⁰ In 1905, Dr. Johannes Semler, a member of the Reichstag, arrived in Kamerun as part of a Parliamentary study group tasked with investigating both the labor question and the reasons behind the continued Kamerunian resistance. Semler's first impression was that he did not "think it [was] possible to recruit permanent voluntary workers from the [Kamerun] hinterland since, they too, suffer considerably in the coastal climate; moreover, it would be undesirable to depopulate the inland districts."¹⁷¹ Up to that point, it was customary for local chiefs to decide who would become laborers. Semler noted that the chiefs did not provide the fittest and most able-bodied; instead they provided "men of lesser value to them, mostly slaves."¹⁷² Moreover, because of the severity, the locals viewed plantation labor with disdain. Contemplating a way to change this view, Semler opined that "the future of Cameroon, especially that of the fertile coastal strip, does not lie in large-scale European plantations, but in African ones."¹⁷³ Semler's comments speak to the Reichstag's questions about the necessity of large industrial plantations.

In 1908, Matthias Erzberger, a member of the influential German Centre Party, decried the routine atrocities taking place on plantations by citing

numerous government reports regarding the violent proceedings of the rubber hunters in German Kamerun[.][These reports] describe[ed] how armed parties herded the natives into the services, levied requisitions on the villages for food in the name of Germany, [and] terrorized districts in their efforts to get rubber out of the country.¹⁷⁴

Those under the control of armed parties were forced to find, tap, and destroy rubber trees.¹⁷⁵ This meant surrounding communities dependent on rubber as a local trading source lost their livelihood.

¹⁷⁰Jeremy Sarkin-Hughes, *Germany's Genocide of the Herero: Kaiser Wilhelm II, his General, his Settlers, his Soldiers*, (Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press, 2011)

¹⁷¹Chilver and Rösenthaller, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 148-149

¹⁷²Chilver and Rösenthaller, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 148-149

¹⁷³Chilver and Rösenthaller, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 148-149

¹⁷⁴Author Unknown, "Natives: Are Treated as Cattle by Rubber Hunters in Africa," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 5, 1908.

¹⁷⁵Calvert, *The Cameroons*, 16-24

Produce from plantations scattered across the colony filled the hulls of ships bound for German ports. To meet the ever-growing demand for goods, Germany resorted to extensive conscription of Kamerunians.¹⁷⁶ In 1909, Kamerun exported 672 tons of ebony valued at £3,038. The following year it exported 1,221 tons valued at £6,090, and by 1912 its ebony export grew in value to £9,055.¹⁷⁷ With regards to cocoa, a prosperous crop from the beginning of colonialism, 2,450 tons exported in 1908 increased to 4,559 tons in 1912, valued at £212,500.¹⁷⁸

Though laborers were paid, their pay was not standardized, resulting in abuses. The treatment of laborers in the colony continued to be a catalyst for indigenous uprisings.¹⁷⁹ In May 1913, Captain Johann Adametz, responding to a government circular, offered insight into the issue of obtaining the necessary labor, stressing that

except for the Bali and from peoples of the escarpment south of Bali, who have for many years supplied people to the WAPV, the Bamenda Division can only supply people for the Northern Railway. It would be more sensible to supply the Cameroon Plantations from their neighboring districts and the well-populated Ossidinge Division rather than from the high Grassfields.¹⁸⁰

Bamileke strangers were the primary group brought in to build the railroad and after its completion many stayed, choosing to work on Duala-owned plantations.¹⁸¹ Adametz suggested that only the southern part of the division was suited to recruitment: “These are hill people [who] are known to be unfit for and to suffer more in the coastal climate than other Grassfield[s] people.”¹⁸² What becomes increasingly evident because of the reliance on migrant labor from within and outside Kamerun is that stranger workers were the norm. The pulling of strangers to

¹⁷⁶Calvert, *The Cameroons*, 26.

¹⁷⁷Calvert, *The Cameroons*, 26.

¹⁷⁸Calvert, *The Cameroons*, 26.

¹⁷⁹Chilver and Röschenhaler, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 160

¹⁸⁰Chilver and Röschenhaler, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 160.

¹⁸¹Chilver and Röschenhaler, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 160

¹⁸²Chilver and Röschenhaler, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 160; Meredith Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws, State of Violence: Nationalism, Grassfields Tradition, and State Building in Cameroon*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 61.

and from Kamerun had reached a boiling point. There were simply no more Kamerunian communities to be drawn from unless workers were recruited by way of the Nigerian border.

Adametz was critical of the WAPV, noting that it already “employ[ed] Bali men,” and that “in 1904 some 1,700 men were recruited and in other years yet more.”¹⁸³ “If Herr von der Loo [manager of the WAPV],” he continued, “could realize what evil results this recruiting in large numbers have had for the Bali people, he would refrain from estimating what the Bamenda Division can supply.”¹⁸⁴ Adametz was referencing the fact that the Bali population had steadily been reduced by extensive recruiting that benefited only the company and the Bali chief. In fact, the Bali chief, as a friend of the WAPV, “received a large dash” of compensation for sending increasing numbers of laborers to the plantations.¹⁸⁵ Since military force was an option for recruiting male labor for the plantations, the men of Bali and surrounding communities experienced violence at the hands of the plantation owners, managers, and overseers.

British Conquest of Kamerun

When Anglo-French forces, also called the Cameroons Expeditionary Force (CEF), took control of Kamerun in 1916, British Brigadier-General C. M. Dobell captured the capital Duala, making it the CEF headquarters,¹⁸⁶ while Yaounde remained the German capital until the conclusion of World War I. Capturing Duala allowed the CEF to witness first-hand the breadth of the wartime atrocities occurring in Kamerun. Civilians were being murdered in cold blood simply because they opposed the German presence.¹⁸⁷ The Duala, like other indigenous Kamerunians, had continuously resisted the brutal nature of German colonialism. The advancement of British and

¹⁸³Chilver and Rösenthaller, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 161

¹⁸⁴Chilver and Rösenthaller, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 161

¹⁸⁵Chilver and Rösenthaller, *Cameroons Tycoon*, 161

¹⁸⁶Lovett Z. Elango, “The Anglo-French ‘Condominium’ in Cameroon 1914-1916: The Myth and Reality,” *Journal of the History Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 10, No.2 (June 1980): 35-52

¹⁸⁷ 1916 [Cd. 8306] *European war. Papers relating to German atrocities, and breaches of the rules of war, in Africa.*

French forces, thus, afforded the Dualas the support they needed to rid themselves of the German yolk. German officials responded by issuing shoot-to-kill orders for any Duala they viewed to be supportive of the CEF.¹⁸⁸

British forces, during the conquest of Kamerun, intercepted a secret message from German Lieutenant von Engelbrechten to fellow Captain Gaisser, a troop commander in Buea and Victoria. This message laid out the German position regarding the “traitorous” Dualas:

Several cases of Dualas attacking my soldiers and who openly help the English in taking over from them their safety and outpost service, show them the roads, and communicate with each other by call, horn, and flag signals—enforce on me the safety of my movements, *i.e.*, to treat the Duala natives and their inter-trading compatriots on the Mungo, Abo, and Dibombe rivers as combatants in the war, and, in special cases, to treat them as rebels and traitors. I have ordered the destruction of all Duala villages. All Dualas met on the roads carrying weapons (machete, bows and arrows, spears, and rifles) are to be shot. Prisoners will only be made when they are caught red-handed and can be legally tried and condemned to death. All Dualas still in the employment of the government in the northern railway part of the Duala district will be arrested and sent under charge to Dschang. Bare district is going to do the same.¹⁸⁹

Upon learning of the German order, the Captain General of the British forces in Cameroon, H. Gwynne Howell, responded to their devastating actions: “The expressed German statement to the natives is, that the British may conquer the country, but they will find no inhabitants left. Hence the wholesale shooting of the natives.”¹⁹⁰ Duala men and women along rivers, in the streets, and on their lands were hunted down and killed by the German forces.

¹⁸⁸1916 [Cd. 8306] *European war. Papers relating to German atrocities, and breaches of the rules of war, in Africa.*

¹⁸⁹1916 [Cd. 8306] *European war. Papers relating to German atrocities, and breaches of the rules of war, in Africa.*

¹⁹⁰1916 [Cd. 8306] *European war. Papers relating to German atrocities, and breaches of the rules of war, in Africa.*

The brutal murder of Wonja Muna, a Kamerounian Duala, offers a glimpse into the atrocities Germans perpetrated as the British advanced.¹⁹¹ Muna lived with his three wives in Bupula near Misellele at the mouth of the Cameroon River. On 11 September 1914, Guse, a plantation manager placed in command of local African forces because of the CEF advance, “ordered a party of soldiers to visit Bupula to capture a Duala man, [Muna], [upon] whom special threats had been issued.”¹⁹² Upon arriving at his home, the soldiers shot Muna, cut off his hands, and kidnapped his wife, Esango Gunale. Gunale was then taken to Duala and held as a prisoner until she was liberated by the CEF.¹⁹³ Abuses such as this were commonplace as the Germans retreated from positions of power across the colony, and the Duala bore the brunt of these atrocities because of their continued resistance to German rule.

Alexander Jacob Reynolds arrived in Kamerun with the Pioneer Company of the Gold Coast Regiment, one of two companies, the other being the West African Frontier Force, which were tasked with capturing Duala. He witnessed the massacre of the Duala natives and several atrocities including the hanging of “Rudolf Bell and some minor chiefs of the Duala.”¹⁹⁴ Knopf wrote: “We cut down their bodies and gave them a military funeral on our arrival to Duala. There was a wholesale massacre of the Dualas by the Germans, who also burnt the Hausa town of Jang.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹1916 [Cd. 8306] European war. Papers relating to German atrocities, and breaches of the rules of war, in Africa.

¹⁹²1916 [Cd. 8306]. *European War. Papers Relating to German Atrocities, and Breaches of Rule of War in Africa.*

¹⁹³1916 [Cd. 8306]. *European War. Papers Relating to German Atrocities, and Breaches of Rule of War in Africa.*

¹⁹⁴Alexander Jacob Reynolds, *From the Ivory Coast to the Cameroons*, (London: Garden City Press, Ltd, 1929), 277.

¹⁹⁵Reynolds, *From the Ivory Coast*, 277.

The Dualas welcomed the arrival of the CEF because the British liberated them from mass murder at German hands.¹⁹⁶ The British established a base in Duala and administering from there, attempted to entice the Duala into their open markets. The CEF, however, were prohibited by the German shoot-to-kill orders from going into the Kamerunian interior.¹⁹⁷ Consequently, British trading firms established their presence at the coast through the importation of goods and products. They further cemented their control by establishing the Bank of British West Africa, which exchanged German marks for British shillings.¹⁹⁸

The CEF initially embraced the idea of administering the colony jointly with France; however, this policy collapsed in the face of imperial and colonial rivalries. France was angered that the British claimed all of German East Africa just as French forces had amassed there for an invasion.¹⁹⁹ France was determined not to leave Cameroon without expanding its West African empire. By 1916, Lord Frederick Lugard had grown tired of the dispute and ordered the Lieutenant Governors of Northern and Southern Nigeria to send British officers from the nearest provinces across the border to set up an administrative nucleus in Cameroon.²⁰⁰ Thus, a combination of British and French forces converged to conquer Cameroon in 1916.²⁰¹ While the French invaded from the interior, the British invaded from the opposite direction along the coast, allowing them to seize the coveted German plantations.²⁰² In the aftermath of the occupation, the British were faced

¹⁹⁶Akinjide Osuntokun, "Anglo-French Occupation and the Provisional Partition of the Cameroons, 1914-1916," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 7, No.4 (June 1975):647-656.

¹⁹⁷Akinjide Osuntokun, "Anglo-French Occupation and the Provisional Partition of the Cameroons, 1914-1916," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 7, No.4 (June 1975):647-656.

¹⁹⁸Akinjide Osuntokun, "Anglo-French Occupation and the Provisional Partition of the Cameroons, 1914-1916," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 7, No.4 (June 1975):647-656.

¹⁹⁹ *Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929

²⁰⁰Akinjide Osuntokun, "Anglo-French Occupation and the Provisional Partition of the Cameroons, 1914-1916," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 7, No.4 (June 1975):647-656

²⁰¹ *Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929

²⁰² *Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929

with the question of what to do with the now idle German plantations. Their revitalization came under the control of a quickly set up Plantation Management Department (PMD).²⁰³

The signing of the Treaty of Versailles formally ceded what would become British Southern Cameroon to Britain as a League of Nations Mandated Trust Territory.²⁰⁴ At the close of the first decade of the 20th century, Britain had turned its focus to incorporating British Southern Cameroon into its other West African colonial holdings.

The Shaping of British Southern Cameroon



Figure 5: Map: Southern Cameroon

The Senior Resident of British Southern Cameroon, who administered the divisions of Victoria, Kumba, Bamenda, and Mamfe, reported directly to the Lieutenant-Governor of the

²⁰³ *Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929

²⁰⁴ Richard A. Goodridge, "In the Most Effective Manner?": Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277.

Southern Provinces of Nigeria.²⁰⁵ According to a 1919 British report, “the chief asset of British Cameroon are the cocoa plantations. It is not too much to say that they determine it and that upon their future control turns the destiny of the native population.”²⁰⁶ By incorporating British Southern Cameroon into its wider sphere of influence, the British positioned the growth of the plantations as the major catalyst for the political, social, and economic development of the colony.

The British viewed plantations as the most important avenue for the promotion of the country’s colonialism.²⁰⁷ To them, the incorporation of the plantations under British management meant a smooth incorporation of Southern Cameroon into Nigeria.²⁰⁸ Plantations offered the essential raw resources needed for British industry, and they were a conduit for the introduction of British currency, agricultural methods, gender norms, and language.²⁰⁹ However, over the course of the war, the majority of the 18,000 plantation laborers working in Cameroon had fled,²¹⁰ and the British were not successful in getting them to return because years of labor on Kamerunian plantations, coupled with German recruiting and abuses, had instilled in them a negative perception of plantation work.

Major Divisions and Towns

Southern Cameroon was divided among the divisions of Bamenda, Mamfe, Kumba, and Victoria. Encompassing 8,010 miles and with an estimated population of 222,654, Bamenda had the largest population density of the Cameroonian Division, amounting to twenty-five people per

²⁰⁵[Cmd. 1647] *West Africa. Reports on the British sphere of the Cameroons. House of Commons Parliamentary Papers.*

²⁰⁶[Cmd. 1647] *West Africa. Reports on the British sphere of the Cameroons. House of Commons Parliamentary Papers.*

²⁰⁷Richard A. Goodridge, “In the Most Effective Manner?”: Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277.

²⁰⁸Richard A. Goodridge, “In the Most Effective Manner?”: Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277.

²⁰⁹Richard A. Goodridge, “In the Most Effective Manner?”: Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277.

²¹⁰Epale, *Plantations and Development*, 62.

square mile.²¹¹ It was naturally rich in rice, palm oil, guinea-corn, groundnuts, cocoyam, and plantains, and had attracted Fulani herders from Nigeria, making cattle a daily fixture in Bamenda. Covering 6,000 miles and boasting a population of 62,169, Mamfe was as abundant in palm oil as Nigeria,²¹² resulting in plans to connect it with the Nigerian palm oil belt. Encompassing 4,394 miles with a population of 67,022, Kumba was a third large town, with a population of twenty-five people per square mile.²¹³ Victoria while only 838 square miles, had a population of 38,243, or thirty-seven people per square mile, and of this population, 18,682 lived on plantations.²¹⁴ The area which the British claimed as British Southern Cameroon was small in comparison to its other territories, but the country's economic potential was immeasurable.

In a memo, the Director of the Agege Planters Union,²¹⁵ one of the first Nigerian co-operatives established in 1907, praised the high quality of Cameroonian cocoa, noting that the variety "grown in the Cameroons and the cocoa from the country almost invariably fetches a much higher price than Nigerian cocoa because it is more carefully cultivated and better prepared for market."²¹⁶ The economic value of Cameroonian cocoa became a critical point as plantation ownership began to move from the Plantation Management Department to private firms and owners. At this time, Ghana dominated the export of cocoa in British West Africa and its cocoa was primarily in the hands of local farmers, making it an important source of indigenous wealth.²¹⁷ Cocoa from Southern Cameroon, on the other hand, was largely controlled by industrial farms,

²¹¹*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1925

²¹²*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1925.

²¹³*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1925

²¹⁴*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1925

²¹⁵Samuel O. Adeyeye, *The Co-Operative Movement in Nigeria: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 20/

²¹⁶Author Unknown, "Cocoa Culture," *The Lagos Weekly Record*, August 21, 1920

²¹⁷Sara Berry, *Cocoa, Custom and Socio-Economic Change in Rural Western Nigeria*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 54; Polly Hill, *The Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana: A Study of Rural Capitalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963)

meaning that it could be farmed using the most up-to-date methods, thus ensuring the highest price on the international market.

Plantation redevelopment became essential to ensure British Southern Cameroon could be profitable. During the war, cocoa was informally traded by Kamerunian middlemen. Cured and dried cocoa “was sold to Rio [del Rey] and Calabar, mostly through the fishing towns [of] Bamoso and Enda.”²¹⁸ Bamoso traders used their large canoes to visit towns along the Nigerian coast to sell cocoa and other plantation products.²¹⁹ This informal trade continued after the war largely from locally sourced farms.

British Attempts To Address the Labor Question

On 18 May 1916, the newly appointed Governor-General of British Southern Cameroon sent an urgent memo across Nigeria that read in part, “[Two thousand] laborers are most urgently required for the plantations in the Cameroons. [The plantations] are valued at one or two (or more) millions sterling and it is necessary to keep them from utter destruction.”²²⁰ The memo then continued to expand on the realities of employment in Cameroon, appealing for laborers, no matter how few:

The work consists almost entirely of clearing the plantations. The labourers are well housed and are fed partly on food grown on the plantations and partly on imported rations. Do you consider it possible to obtain volunteers from your Province and if so what pay in addition to the food would tempt the men to go and how long would you suggest that they should stay[?] Parties however small will be accepted in the hope that if they find the conditions favorable they might induce others to go later. Governor-General is very anxious if possible to obtain labour from Nigeria.²²¹

²¹⁸*Theft of a Considerable quantity of produce from the Cameroons Plantations, reporting. 2 Registration of Native Cocoa Farmers, suggesting.* NAE, CSE 1/27/673

²¹⁹*Theft of a Considerable quantity of produce from the Cameroons Plantations, reporting. 2 Registration of Native Cocoa Farmers, suggesting.* NAE, CSE 1/27/673

²²⁰*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242

²²¹*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242

Laborers who made the journey worked under the Supervisor of the Plantation Management Department for a “local rate [of] 4 1/2 d four pence halfpenny with free rations”²²² consisting of “rice and stockfish with local produce: bananas, yams and a small allowance of tobacco and salt.”²²³ These migrant workers could expect to be away from home for most of the planting season, which lasted between four to six months.²²⁴

The Resident of Zaria in colonial Nigeria announced the call for migrant laborers in a telegraph to the Governor-General, explaining that he had recruited 250 laborers who were headed to Lagos to board the *Goldsmith*.²²⁵ On 23 May 1916, the Secretary of the Southern Provinces responded to the call for migrant laborers, writing that “500 to 600 laborers”²²⁶ were leaving from Port Harcourt, Nigeria, to Victoria, aboard the *S. S. Boulama*.

The urgency of the Governor-General’s call clouded the fact that he specifically requested labor from Southeastern Nigeria. Thus, Hausa laborers arrived along with Igbo, Ibibio and Yoruba men.²²⁷ However, it quickly became apparent that Hausa men were not suited for plantation work, and many left soon after they arrived in Cameroon, with those remaining often leaving soon after. Hausa men, while not suited for plantation work, were successful in setting up markets and even more successful in herding their cattle across Cameroon.²²⁸

Single Nigerian men volunteered because of the attractive wages, while married men volunteered because they were able to bring their wives.²²⁹ Allowing wives to accompany their spouses expanded the pool of potential recruits. The spousal mandate, spearheaded by Lord

²²² *Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²²³ *Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²²⁴ *Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²²⁵ *Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²²⁶ *Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²²⁷ *Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²²⁸ Epale, *Plantations and Development*, 68-69.

²²⁹ Epale, *Plantations and Development*, 68-69.

Lugard, motivated “laborers who enlist[ed] for one year [to] take one wife each.” However, “laborers enlisting for less than one year [could bring] no wives.”²³⁰

On 25 May 1916, the Secretary of the Southern Province, Nigeria, wrote to the British Resident of Buea, Cameroon, offering an update on the latest recruitment figures: “300 laborers from Northern Province [will] leave Lagos by steamship *Accra* May 13th for Victoria. Also, by a later boat 600 from Owerri Province.”²³¹ The men who disembarked at Victoria were among the first group of Nigerians to arrive in Southern Cameroon.²³² On their eventual return to Nigeria, these men set in motion a level of circulatory migration that would reshape life in both Southern Cameroon and Southeastern Nigeria. Collectively, the Resident of Zaria and the Secretary of the Southern Provinces, Nigeria, had amassed 1,750 laborers for the Cameroonian market.²³³ This significant undertaking was propelled by the population density of Nigeria as well as the desire of many Nigerians to migrate far beyond their community borders. Circulatory migration, thus, became an important element in the formation of both Nigeria and British Southern Cameroon.

The year 1917 was one of shortages across British Southern Cameroon, and more laborers were needed to sustain plantation development. Colonial documents of the time emphasize this situation:

The labor shortage became acute from the failure to attract laborers from Bamenda and Chang and the shortage was made up by forced drafts on the Kumba district. By September 1917 out of 14,000 taxable males, 5,000 were at work and the district was expected to relieve the 5,000 as their contracts expired. At the end of 1917 forced labor was abandoned and the number of laborers from the Kumba district fell at once to 2,000 in round numbers. On the assumption that 10,000 men were required in all and that each division should supply 2,000 volunteers the Kumba district was supplying its proper proportion of from 15%-20%- the highest proportion consistent with native life. Sufficient volunteers,

²³⁰*Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²³¹*Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²³² *Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²³³*Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

however, could not be attracted from the other divisions and in 1918 the draft was applied again.²³⁴

In addition to Victoria, Kumba was the only other division with the possibility for economic growth from the plantations.²³⁵ However, like Victoria, it did not have the population to sustain plantation growth. What Kumba offered instead was the most fertile land in the region.²³⁶ Thus, the British prodded men through conscription to work in Kumba. However, the community did not view work on the plantations as important because they were more concerned with supporting their own farms.²³⁷ The Cameroonian outlook toward plantation labor contributed to significant reductions in labor following the abandonment of forced and the introduction of volunteer labor.

Thus, on 2 April 1917, the Resident of Cameroon expressed his concern about plantation laborers as well as their low numbers: “there are now some 6,000 laborers on the plantations, they were recruited on a contract early last year. Many of these are becoming time expired. A further 4,000 are needed.”²³⁸ The 6,000 laborers the Resident referenced had been recruited from the Victoria Division. However, neither Victoria nor the other divisions could supply the additional 4,000 men needed.²³⁹ The reluctance of the interior populations to work on the plantations was “due almost entirely to having to absent themselves for many months at a time from their homes.”²⁴⁰ The PMD had placed a premium on laborers who were not only willing to work for a wage but who were willing to stay or return to the same plantation the next harvest season because these officials understood that to operate the plantations, a minimum of 10,000 laborers were

²³⁴ *Questions of the Supply of Labour For*, NAE, CSE 5/12/26.

²³⁵ *Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²³⁶ *Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²³⁷ *Plantations in the Cameroons Province Labour for*, NAE, B 1109/16.

²³⁸ *Questions of the Supply of Labour For*, NAE, CSE 5/12/26.

²³⁹ *Questions of the Supply of Labour For*, NAE, CSE 5/12/26.

²⁴⁰ *Questions of the Supply of Labour For*, NAE, CSE 5/12/26.

needed annually and that the men would have to be willing to remain beyond the harvesting season.²⁴¹ However, finding such an indigenous population was proving impossible in Southern Cameroon.²⁴² The Resident, thus, had to look to Nigeria to fill this void.

The First Nigerian Labor Protest

While Nigerian laborers were recruited with promises of a good salary, they soon came face-to-face with the physical and environmental demands of life and work in Southern Cameroon. During November 1916, 22 of the 1,120 Nigerian laborers died from pneumonia, dysentery, and ancylostomiasis after only three months in Southern Cameroon.²⁴³ British plantation officials attributed the deaths to the “large percentage of old men and weaklings”²⁴⁴ among the laborers, a veiled attempt to justify the abnormally high mortality rate. While the men were willing and able to work, they were neither accustomed to Southern Cameroon’s climate nor its food.

On 12 January 1917, a group of 202 laborers recruited from Calabar, Nigeria, led by their four headmen, presented a petition detailing their plight in Southern Cameroon. These men, recruited to work on cocoa plantations, were faced with insufficient food and unfair pay. While working at Morigo, they were “badly treated and frequently flogged.”²⁴⁵ Making matters worse, the laborers were given only “3 cigarette tins [of] rice each per week and 2 tablespoonfuls of salt. [And] for a change of diet, three plantains each per week.”²⁴⁶ These rations were far from the quantity of food that the men were accustomed to in Nigeria. Such a sharp change in diet and climate severely impacted the health of many of the laborers, though many were willing to endure the hardships as long as they received the pay, they were promised.²⁴⁷

²⁴¹*Questions of the Supply of Labour For*, NAE, CSE 5/12//26.

²⁴²*Questions of the Supply of Labour For*, NAE, CSE 5/12//26.

²⁴³*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242.

²⁴⁴*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242.

²⁴⁵*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242.

²⁴⁶*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242.

²⁴⁷*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242.

Charley, a senior headman, left Morigo for Butta to discuss the poor working conditions on the plantations with Mr. F. Evans, the Supervisor of the Plantation. Evans was tasked with keeping the estates cultivated and profitable. He subsequently visited Morigo on three separate occasions, but no changes were made. Instead the laborers were relocated to the Sanje cocoa plantation near the slopes of Cameroon Mountain. There the laborers “were given two cigarette tins [of] rice and 10 plantains alternately daily and two spoonfuls of salt as usual.”²⁴⁸ While the laborers’ diet here was better compared to Morigo, the quality of their food still left a lot to be desired. Laborers complained that

beyond salt, we were given nothing else with which to eat the rice or plantains. The latter was only increased in quantity but not in quality as we are always given them when they were not good enough for human consumption.²⁴⁹

The diet of the laborers was only improved as a result of medical recommendations.²⁵⁰ In response to the mounting difficulties that life in Southern Cameroon at Morigo, “4 gangs of labourers signified their intention to forego their pay if they could only be sent back to Calabar, Nigeria.”²⁵¹ The laborers’ willingness to return to Calabar with no pay but only the clothes on their backs speaks to the sad conditions they were forced to work under. In response, Supervisor Evans, ordered “the headmen of those four gangs [to be] flogged and forced back to the plantation.”²⁵²

The 202 Nigerian laborers remained until the end of their contract, at which time they went to Butta to receive their pay and head home to Nigeria. At this time Evans informed them that “there was no steamer to take us back to Calabar and we should go back and do some work for

²⁴⁸*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242

²⁴⁹*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242.

²⁵⁰*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242.

²⁵¹*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242

²⁵²*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242; Marjorie Linda Richardson, *From German Kamerun to British Cameroon, 1884-1961, With Special Reference to the Plantations*, (Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1999), 71.

which he promised to give us extra pay.”²⁵³ The men were convinced to work an additional 10 days, but after this extension, they were not paid the full amount of money they were promised.²⁵⁴ Originally, headmen were promised £9 for 6 months of work in addition to 6d for food and laborers, £4.10/ for 6-months and 3d for food. In reality, headmen received between £3-£7.13, while laborers received £1.10/ to £3.5/, and neither was provided money for food.²⁵⁵ Their low pay highlights the enduring hardships experienced by laborers in Southern Cameroon, and plantation officials had to be mindful of the working conditions because these men were not bound to the land. While Evans punished laborers by flogging, such punishment was not sustainable because laborers could run away at any point. Moreover, laborers typically returned home after their 6-month contracts, and they could speak either positively or negatively of their experiences. Since informal recruiting of laborers was the lifeblood of the plantations, the way the laborers were treated had to change drastically to sustain them.

Toward this end, beginning in the 1920s, the Resident began to vigorously campaign for a rollback of the conscription of laborers across Cameroon.²⁵⁶ The importance of voluntary labor was emphasized in a 1922 parliamentary review of British Southern Cameroon. This report documented the progress the colony had made in its shift from conscription to voluntary labor:

Under government control, every precaution was taken to ensure the all-round well-being of the laborers, but the sense of freedom was crushed out of the people. Unsuitable men, from the Northern grassland country, were sent down to the coast and the death rate was heavy. Following British occupation of the country, though it would have resulted in economic chaos if the system of government recruiting had been suddenly stopped, it was decided as a general policy, which was also strongly supported by plantation management, gradually to abolish the system of recruiting labor. The transition stage from a government

²⁵³*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242.

²⁵⁴*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242.

²⁵⁵*Cameroons Plantations Labourers For*, NAE, CALPROF 5.6.242.

²⁵⁶1922 [Cmd. 1647] *West Africa. Reports on the British sphere of the Cameroons*. House of Commons Parliamentary Papers.

controlled to a purely voluntary system was not without difficulty, [but] at the present time, there are over 11,000 work people who have come to the coast.²⁵⁷

It was voluntary labor, not conscription, that over time, built a migratory labor class. Volunteers collected wages to pay bride price and taxes and buy modern goods.²⁵⁸ These purchases allowed the laborers to operate as informal recruiters. Conscription, on the other hand, offered none of the benefits offered by voluntary work. Moreover, the treatment of laborers played a significant role in the future viability of plantations, and rumors of maltreatment could lead to a plantation being immediately abandoned or avoided by laborers the following season. The response of laborers to maltreatment on plantations during this early period can best be understood by recounting the Ekona Estate Incident.

The Ekona Estate Incident

In 1921 a significant labor protest, referred to as the Ekona Estate Incident, was detailed in a colonial report. This incident illustrates the steps the colonial state was willing to take to present the illusion of plantations as safe work environments. Additionally, the Ekona Estate Incident highlights the pressure that the state placed on managers and overseers to realize a profit.

The Ekona Estate, a 4,000-acre plantation that employed 1,200 laborers, was a half-day's journey from Victoria and the residence of Mr. F. Evans, the Superintendent of the Plantations.²⁵⁹ Managers of estates were typically European. Below them were the overseers, who supervised the work of the laborers on the plantation, followed by the headmen, the rank below overseer who were typically leaders in their indigenous communities.²⁶⁰ The Ekona Estate fell into disrepair

²⁵⁷1922 [Cmd. 1647] *West Africa. Reports on the British sphere of the Cameroons. House of Commons Parliamentary Papers.*

²⁵⁸1922 [Cmd. 1647] *West Africa. Reports on the British sphere of the Cameroons. House of Commons Parliamentary Papers.*

²⁵⁹ *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers, NAE, CSE 5/13/28*

²⁶⁰ *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers, NAE, CSE 5/13/28*

during the war; but afterward, it became a model city and plantation with electric lights, a monorail, and telephone lines.²⁶¹ Indeed, it exemplified what cities and plantations could potentially become.

Everyday plantation life consisted of a “morning roll-call at 5:30 am, mid-day rest 11:30 am to 1:30 pm, [and] evening roll call at 5:30 pm.”²⁶² At this time, most of the men focused on clearing the land and maintaining the cocoa and palm oil fields, while a more skilled, smaller group of men worked in the drying houses. Laborers, “grouped together under headmen of the same clan, [were] free to choose under which headman they worked.”²⁶³ The position of headman was prized because it “paid according to the number of men who wish[ed] to work under them; thus, the contentment of labor depended largely on the headmen, who also [were] the agents, unpaid as for such, who attract[ed] further men from their clan or village to work in their gang.”²⁶⁴ A headman was paid more based on the number of men he informally recruited.²⁶⁵ A single disgruntled headman could, therefore, doom a plantation by opting out of the informal recruiting network and convincing his fellow headmen to avoid the plantation.²⁶⁶ The power the headmen had in supplying labor offers insight into the motives of the state in its investigation of the Ekona Estate incident.

The Ekona Estate Incident occurred on 12 March 1921 when Manager Chambers-Hunter and Overseer Ngango of the Ekona Estate were accused of illegally flogging two Bamenda headmen, Sama and Toonga.²⁶⁷ Flogging, a German method of control, was used across the colony under that country’s occupation. Once the British assumed control, they outlawed corporal

²⁶¹*Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers, NAE, CSE 5/13/28*

²⁶²*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons, 1924.*

²⁶³*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons, 1924.*

²⁶⁴*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons, 1924.*

²⁶⁵*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons, 1924.*

²⁶⁶*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons, 1924.*

²⁶⁷*Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers, NAE, CSE 5/13/28*

punishment although it was still used on some plantations.²⁶⁸ Toonga and Sama had arrived at the Ekona Estate from Bali-Kumbat, Bamenda Division, with 113 other men. None of the men was a volunteer, but instead all were conscripted at the behest of the Resident.²⁶⁹ After the flogging incident, Toonga and Sama, along with 49 other laborers, traveled from the Ekona Estate to speak to the Resident at Buea, alleging that Ngango and Mr. Chambers-Hunter had flogged them. These were serious allegations, highlighted by Toonga and Sama walking to Buea to make their case as it was customary for such disputes to be investigated and ratified by the plantation manager.²⁷⁰

K. B. Ekwe, an Igbo Native Clerk in Buea, recorded Toonga and Sama's ordeal.²⁷¹ Toonga earlier recounted routine abuse on the Ekona Estate; now he repeated that he and four other men were reported to the manager for laziness by an unknown overseer or laborer, and "without hearing us the manager put us down [and] gave four of us 25 lashes each and Sama 15 lashes."²⁷² The testimony was corroborated by statements taken from Sama, Laa, Tisey, Lase, and Wonyem.²⁷³

Toonga continued

I have also been told by several people of my gang this overseer said to them that not all of us will return to our country i.e. some of us will have to lose their lives on the plantation by flogging before the completion of their contracts. This is the cause of my running away from the plantation as to complain myself to the resident.²⁷⁴

Toonga's allegations were strengthened by the accusation that the laborers' lives had been threatened. Deaths of laborers from flogging and overwork on plantations were common during

²⁶⁸ Frederick William Hugh Migeod, *Through British Cameroons*, (London: Heath Craton Ltd, 1925), 32.

²⁶⁹ *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

²⁷⁰ *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

²⁷¹ *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

²⁷² *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

²⁷³ *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

²⁷⁴ *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

the German occupation; however, the British were convinced that the conditions on their plantations were much more humane. The Ekona statements now challenged this perception, suggesting plantation abuses under British colonial rule in Southern Cameroon.

After Toonga and Sama completed their report, the Deputy Secretary of the Plantation, accompanied by Father Douvry, the Supervisor of the Catholic Mission Cameroon, traveled to the Ekona Estate. Father Douvry, who also spoke to laborers in Buea, asked the men, “were you flogged by your white master?” and they replied, “No.”²⁷⁵ The Deputy Secretary and Father Douvry hoped that laborers in Ekona would provide no information that faulted Chambers-Hunter’s actions. With no such information, a case could then be made that while abuses may have occurred at Ekona Estate during the German period, the current manager, who was British had instituted changes to avoid future abuses. The Ekona investigation shows that the inquiry was not focused on the accusation of flogging but was intended to find an alternative explanation for the injuries suffered by the laborers. The Deputy Secretary of the Plantation further speculated: “the sores were such as I should not myself have attributed to flogging, but I can claim no special knowledge of such injuries.”²⁷⁶

To further support the British intention, several headmen on the Ekona Estate were reported to have remarked, “wherever he go he make palaver,” characterizing Toonga as a man who did not enjoy plantation labor but instead preferred to make trouble.²⁷⁷ Indeed, Headman Saa from Badadju claimed to have witnessed the dispute between Toonga, Sama, and Ngango, reporting that “one man was sitting down and smoking a pipe during work time, [Ngango] told him to get up; he

²⁷⁵Mr. Chambers-Hunter, *Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

²⁷⁶Mr. Chambers-Hunter, *Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

²⁷⁷Mr. Chambers-Hunter, *Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

said, 'I no get up' and caught [Ngango] by shoulder and called out. Then all labourers left cutlasses, and Toonga said, 'let us go to Buea.'"²⁷⁸ Mensah, an Ekona laborer, added the following: "Sama said he was a prince of Bali and had not come to work. When I asked him why he came, he said, 'I no want for come, but Governor he made me. It be Governor law that bring us here.'"²⁷⁹ According to Mensah, "the Bali were only carriers in German time and could not be trained [for] plantation work."²⁸⁰

If indeed Sama was a Bali prince and a carrier during the "German time,"¹⁰⁸ these facts could shed further light on this Ekona incident. First, the abuses on the Ekona Estate seemed to be remnants from this earlier time. Second, as carriers, neither Sama nor any Bali would have been routinely flogged or threatened with death. However, other Cameroonian plantation workers, like the ones who testified against Sama and Toonga, would have been conditioned to abusive treatment. Nevertheless, the Ekona Estate Incident illuminates the difficulty the British had in transforming German-era plantation conscription, with all of its abuses, to the more "humane" British era of volunteer labor. The official report of the Ekona Estate Incident offered the following conclusions:

There does not seem to have been any general or severe flogging and the two headmen who were thrashed deserved it. Mr. Chambers-Hunter has been warned that he must be careful to avoid flogging labourers in the future. The headmen Ngango was apparently impatient with these Bamendas who have since been found on two estates to be bad workers. He evidently nagged them to try and get some work done, he will be reminded that though trained in German methods it is now necessary to adopt British ones and any flogging or assaulting will be severely dealt with.

²⁷⁸Mr. Chambers-Hunter, *Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

²⁷⁹Mr. Chambers-Hunter, *Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

²⁸⁰Mr. Chambers-Hunter, *Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers*, NAE, CSE 5/13/28

I would point out in conclusion that for you to have heard complaints from estate labourers against their headmen and overseers which had not been enquired into either by the estate manager or supervisor lowers our prestige with the labour force. I hope should there be any further complaint, which I do not anticipate there will be, you will send complaints to the Manager of their estate or to me at Bota.²⁸¹

In his defense Chamber-Hunters reminded Evans, the Supervisor of the Plantations: “when I took over the estates you very especially drew my attention to the financial position. I am confident that I have never required from a labourer more work than he was capable of doing, but I have insisted on that accountability, hence all this trouble.”²⁸² The manager never denied flogging the laborers, but rather justified his actions. Under the direction of the PMD, Chambers-Hunter had been recruited to generate profit from the war-torn Ekona Estate. He further maintained:

I wish to point out that flogging is not commonly practiced on the estate, but taking into consideration local conditions, I hardly see how I could have done otherwise when ordering the two headmen Toonga and Sama to be chastised for insolence and laziness, and in taking the action I did, I only condoned a custom which is practiced by almost all officials in the Cameroons. Corporal chastisement would appear to be the only punishment understood by the natives here.²⁸³

Chambers-Hunters further recounted that he had witnessed numerous officials order the public flogging of Cameroonians. In the final analysis his position was that profit superseded humanity and, thus, flogging was acceptable.

Evans, for his part, drove home the colonial point of view: the Bamendas “are unaccustomed to estate work and bearing in mind that we hope later on to induce up-country natives to come down voluntarily for work and to settle on plantations it is important they should be dealt with sympathetically.”²⁸⁴ He maintained that the flogging of headmen and laborers raised

²⁸¹ *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers, NAE, CSE 5/13/28*

²⁸² *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers, NAE, CSE 5/13/28*

²⁸³ *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers, NAE, CSE 5/13/28*

²⁸⁴ *Mr. Chambers-Hunter, Manager Ekona Estate complaint against and one of his Overseers by Bamenda Labourers, NAE, CSE 5/13/28*

significant concerns for being able to attract migrant laborers from British West Africa. Moreover, the increasing number of labor migrants from upcountry Francophone Cameroun created an unwelcome situation from the French colonial perspective.

Cameroonian Plantations Under the British

The PMD was a hastily formed department charged with the task of managing and improving more than two dozen industrial Cameroonian plantations of various sizes, with a long-term goal of selling them to private companies as these officials believed that private management would generate higher profits.²⁸⁵ Firms with the most significant interest in acquiring these plantations were German owners, who after WWI transferred many of their operations to Fernando Po. Ambas Bay Company, a former private German firm with an expressed an interest in plantation ownership.²⁸⁶ The Ambas Bay Company had “long owned [land] under the name of the Bai Cocoa and Rubber Estates Co. on a small plantation along the Meme [river].”²⁸⁷ Prospective buyers were aware of the labor shortage in British Cameroon, and the Ambas Bay Co. asserted it would “not buy [plantations] without a guarantee that labor will be forthcoming.”²⁸⁸ Even after the loss of its African colonies, Germany still attempted to position itself as an economic player in West Africa. In 1920, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* reported that “the Germans were seeking to open business connections both with European Houses and Native merchants and traders.”²⁸⁹ Germany sought to reestablish trade in Africa to meet the country’s demand for products such as cocoa, palm oil, and rubber. The PMD made it clear that it would not recruit laborers; that would be the responsibility

²⁸⁵ *Questions of the Supply of Labour For*, NAE, CSE 5/12//26

²⁸⁶ *Questions of the Supply of Labour For*, NAE, CSE 5/12//26

²⁸⁷ *Questions of the Supply of Labour For*, NAE, CSE 5/12//26

²⁸⁸ *Questions of the Supply of Labour For*, NAE, CSE 5/12//26

²⁸⁹ *Sierra Leone Weekly*, August 21, 1920.

of the private firms. Thus, with interest in buying back their former plantations, the German firms had to operate under new British regulations.²⁹⁰

The importance of plantations in Southern Cameroon grew as Britain's other West African colonies suffered from a lack of trade and excessive taxation. On 26 May 1922, for instance, the *Nigerian Pioneer* reported that "over-taxation is one of the main causes of the trouble in the Gold Coast, where the disease is spreading through the plantations."²⁹¹ The disease referenced is cocoa disease, which in 1919 infected "81.85 percent"²⁹² of the Gold Coast plantations. Exporting 40,000 tons of cocoa in 1906, the Gold Coast had become the world's largest exporter, and primarily grown by entrepreneurs, the exports grew, reaching 200,000 tons in 1923.²⁹³ The cocoa disease of 1919, thus, not only devastated the Gold Coast cocoa industry but also impacted the men and women who made the industry possible.

On 26 May 1922, the *Nigerian Pioneer* ran a notice about auctioning "the ex-enemy properties in the British sphere of the Cameroons consisting of the greater part of the well-known cocoa plantations about Victoria and on the slopes of the Cameroon Mountain."²⁹⁴ Similar notices ran in newspapers across the British Empire. While equally rich in rubber, cotton, and palm oil, the commodity of the day remained Southern Cameroon cocoa. The British thought it could reap the highest auction price from cocoa plantations, which were valued at 853,000 pounds sterling.

Billed as "the event of the week in West African matters,"²⁹⁵ on 10 November 1922, the auction of the Cameroonian properties garnered significant interest, but "most of the larger estates

²⁹⁰ *Sierra Leone Weekly*, August 21, 1920.

²⁹¹ John H. Harris, "The Decline of West Africa Trade," *The Nigerian Pioneer*, May 26, 1922.

²⁹² John H. Harris, "The Decline of West Africa Trade," *The Nigerian Pioneer*, May 26, 1922.

²⁹³ Gareth Austin, "Vent for Surplus and Productivity breakthrough? The Ghanaian Cocoa take-off, 1890-1936," *Economic History Review*, 67, 4 (2014):1035-1064.

²⁹⁴ *The Nigerian Pioneer*, May 26, 1922.

²⁹⁵ "London Letter," *The Nigerian Pioneer*, November 10, 1922

were put back and only a small number of properties”²⁹⁶ were sold. Mr. G.W. Christian, described as “an African gentleman”²⁹⁷ who had been exiled by German colonial officials in 1902, bought the Idena Estate for £16,500, intending to administer the plantation directly.²⁹⁸

In total only three plantations were sold, and the rest remained under the control of the PMD. There were two primary reasons why the plantations failed to be sold. First, the auction was skewed in favor of British financed firms, which had the capital but were afraid of investing because of the falling price of the crops coming from Cameroon.²⁹⁹ In addition, they believed that Southern Cameroon would be given to another colonial power. Second, the auction excluded German firms, which not only had the financial backing to purchase the plantations but were more willing to take the economic risk.³⁰⁰

By 1925, German-financed firms purchased the remaining plantations.³⁰¹ The “re-equipment by the new owners with machinery and tools caused a considerable increase in imports as well as in local trade.”³⁰² Moreover, the selling of the remaining plantations brought an end to the PMD, which since 1915 had operated as a “quasi-government department” and as such did not rely on the government to recruit labor.³⁰³ The PMD made it clear to private plantation owners that “the general principle that has been observed throughout the Cameroons Province for the last

²⁹⁶“London Letter,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, November 10, 1922

²⁹⁷“London Letter,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, November 10, 1922

²⁹⁸Richard A. Goodridge, “In the Most Effective Manner?”: Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277.

²⁹⁹ Richard A. Goodridge, “In the Most Effective Manner?”: Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277.

³⁰⁰ Richard A. Goodridge, “In the Most Effective Manner?”: Britain and the Disposal of the Cameroons Plantations, 1914-1924, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996):251-277.

³⁰¹ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1925.

³⁰² *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1925.

³⁰³ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1925.

eight years is that it is not the function of the Government to provide labor for private enterprise or to put any pressure on the people to work for wages.”³⁰⁴

Information obtained from 1924 government reports indicates that the estates collectively had 11,824 laborers and a staff of 75 Europeans and 565 Africans.³⁰⁵ The laborers continued to work under oral and daily contracts, meaning the men were free to leave whenever they chose, whether to return home or to relocate to another plantation. A key component of the labor sustainability at the time was labor disbursement. Since laborers operated exclusively on oral and daily contracts and could leave at any point, most left at the end of the month following payday. Under this new German management, attempts to keep laborers on plantations varied, with most staggering paydays to keep laborers from leaving.³⁰⁶

British officials complained that while the foundation was present, Cameroonians did not quickly acquiesce to wage labor. The plantations were envisioned as a space to create a large population of consistent wage earners who would pay taxes and increase the expansion of the wage economy across the colony. Such thinking was viewed with a wide lens as the demand for plantation labor, even in 1923, was 10 to 12,000.³⁰⁷ The local population was never able to meet the demands required to ensure a meaningful profit for plantations. Thus, strangers from the beginning impacted the wage economy in Cameroon, a situation supported by the colonial administration.

Francophone Cameroonians and the Labor Question

The Francophone Cameroun came close to meeting the colony’s labor demands. Migrant labor coming from French West Africa had been central to meeting the labor demands during the

³⁰⁴*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1926.

³⁰⁵*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1926.

³⁰⁶*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1926.

³⁰⁷*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1923.

German era.³⁰⁸ Because the two territories, Francophone Cameroun and Southern Cameroon, were now ruled by two sovereign powers, the recruitment of labor was administrated by their respective foreign offices.³⁰⁹ This situation was communicated to Evans, the Inspector General of Plantations at Victoria and the Resident by the Secretary of the Southern Provinces, Mr. H. O. S. Wright. Evans and the Resident of Buea had applied to Francophone Cameroun to formally recruit plantation labor. In their communications, Secretary Wright stated that he was

directed to inform [Mr. Evans] that as recruiting of labor in the French sphere of the Cameroons had been made the subject of diplomatic actions in Paris and London, [Mr. Evans] should on no account attempt any local action to secure from the French side of the boundary without previous reference to their office for the Governor Generals orders.³¹⁰

The power to recruit locally in English speaking Southern Cameroon and Nigeria was all that was officially allowed.

French officials sought the development of French Cameroon and supplying labor to British plantations did not fit into their colonial schemes.³¹¹ Regrettably for them, increasing numbers of French Cameroonians preferred to work and live in British Southern Cameroon.³¹² In addition, the artificial borders separating the two territories could not end the trade and communications that had been established prior to these divisions. Nevertheless, in a letter to the Governor-General of Nigeria, the Governor of French Cameroon sought to clarify the French position:

The English ambassador to Paris having asked on behalf of his government for permission to recruit labourers in portions of Togo and Cameroons occupied by us.

³⁰⁸*Native Labourers in French Cameroons. Applications from the Resident Buea and Inspector General of Plantations at Victoria for permission to engage*, NAE, CSE 3/9/16.

³⁰⁹*Native Labourers in French Cameroons. Applications from the Resident Buea and Inspector General of Plantations at Victoria for permission to engage*, NAE, CSE 3/9/16.

³¹⁰*Native Labourers in French Cameroons. Applications from the Resident Buea and Inspector General of Plantations at Victoria for permission to engage*, NAE, CSE 3/9/16.

³¹¹*Native Labourers in French Cameroons. Applications from the Resident Buea and Inspector General of Plantations at Victoria for permission to engage*, NAE, CSE 3/9/16.

³¹²*Native Labourers in French Cameroons. Applications from the Resident Buea and Inspector General of Plantations at Victoria for permission to engage*, NAE, CSE 3/9/16.

The [French] Republican Government notified the British Government that the demand for manual labour in the regions under notice, especially after the intrusive recruitment which had been made there both for the Tirailleurs and porters, was such that it seemed inappropriate to sanction a further exodus of natives.³¹³

The British had no other choice but to accept the French position and withdraw their application. Labor would not be formally recruited from French Cameroun.

However, according to a 1925 Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons, it was common knowledge that “large numbers of laborers, particularly Yaundes and Bakokos, [arrived] from the French side as they used to do in the pre-war days. This immigration has naturally caused the authorities of the French Camerouns some anxiety.”³¹⁴ In response, the French issued a decree imposing a deposit of “500 francs and 25 francs’ passport fee for each intending emigrant from the French sphere.”³¹⁵ This measure, however, did not deter the tide of cross-border migration. Thus, in 1925, France issued Official No. 127, a government decree prohibiting French Camerounians from leaving the territory to work in another colony.³¹⁶ This decree was not only a significant blow to plantations that were slowly reaching pre-World War I production levels but it also created a labor vacuum that would, in time, be filled by Igbo migrant laborers.³¹⁷

A 1926 census provides data on the changing trends of labor migrations. Of the 12,128 laborers across all Southern Cameroons plantations, “over one-third of the laborers came from a distance of more than 100 miles and over one-half belong to”³¹⁸ communities under French mandate. One came from Calabar, Nigeria, and seven were classified as Hausa. Additionally, two

³¹³ *Native Labourers in French Cameroons. Applications from the Resident Buea and Inspector General of Plantations at Victoria for permission to engage*, NAE, CSE 3/9/16.

³¹⁴ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1925.

³¹⁵ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1925.

³¹⁶ Mark W DeLancey, *Cameroon: Dependence and Independence*, (London: Westview Press: 1989), 17-18.

³¹⁷ Joseph Simon Epale, *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon, 1885-1975*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1985), 99.

³¹⁸ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1926.

came from the Gold Coast and fifty-three from Togo.³¹⁹ During this time, a plantation manager “had dismissed all his Bakweri [Cameroonian] labourers because he found Yaundes and Bakokos [Cameroonian] better workers.”³²⁰ The census shows laborers were no longer arriving in an intermittent stream but rather as a continuous flow of laborers from neighboring Nigeria, allowing managers to pool men they viewed as more desirable for plantation work.³²¹

Census data also provide insight into the presence of laborers from French Cameroun. Following the passage of Official No. 127, the numbers of French laborers steadily declined.³²² Still, the presence of French Cameroonians had a tremendous impact on the labor in Southern Cameroon. As articulated in government documents from a meeting with H. E., the Governor, during his visit to Cameroon Province:

12,128 labourers were employed on estates with a staff of 106 Europeans and 878 Africans. None of the plantations have complained of a shortage of labour except Idenau and Bibundi in the Victoria Division, and the Deutsch Westafrikanische Handelsgesellschaft and the African and Eastern Trade Corporation, Ltd., in the Kumba Division. In the first two cases, this is due to geographical position. In the two latter instances, the difficulty is probably owing to a failure to make conditions sufficiently attractive. Over 50% of the labour comes from the French Cameroons, the figures being 5,789 of British and 6,330 of French Cameroun origin.³²³

The decline of French migrants created permanent labor settlements (i.e., laborers remaining on a single plantation for upwards of two-years) that were increasingly filled by Igbo labor migrants.³²⁴ These laborers either returned to the same plantation each season or lived on the land between

³¹⁹ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1926.

³²⁰ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1926.

³²¹ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1926. “With a staff of 106 Europeans and 878 Africans. The African staff are classified as clerks, dressers, nurses, overseers, carpenters, bricklayers, masons, painters, joiners, blacksmiths, mechanics, engine and motor drivers, firemen, quartermasters, and coopers and a number of apprentices to each class of artisan.”

³²² *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1926

³²³ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE.

³²⁴ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE.

planting seasons.³²⁵ Colonial officials argued that the change to permanent labor settlements was a result of four factors, the first being a “disinclination of wives of laborers coming from more remote areas, especially in French territory, to follow their husbands.”³²⁶ It was easier for bachelors to move from plantation to plantation either mid-season or the following season. However, if the men brought their wives and families, stability in one place became important. A second factor was “the reduction of the labor rolls by plantation companies after the cropping season.”³²⁷ This reduction meant that laborers faced the possibility of being dismissed following planting and harvesting season. Remaining better positioned them for promotion to headmen or staff. The third factor was “the non-return of laborers who come only for the specific purpose of obtaining funds for dowry and other personal requirements.”³²⁸ The fourth factor, which propelled permanent settlement, involved the plantation employers who preferred “to see the bulk of the labor permanently settled on their estates.”³²⁹ While some wives did not embrace the appeal of living on a plantation, others found ways to adjust to this new environment, primarily because of others who were from the same region or ethnic group.

Kumba Division included 100 Ibibio and 130 Igbo migrant laborers,³³⁰ and plantation employers boasted that “the proportion of permanent labor [was] as high as 50 to 60 percent.”³³¹ Plantation workers who chose to remain received increased rations, and permanent laborers who brought wives received “extra food ration for women and children and all [were] offered plots of land for those who wished to grow extra food or luxury crops. These garden plots [were] mostly

³²⁵ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1927.

³²⁶ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1927.

³²⁷ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1927.

³²⁸ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1927.

³²⁹ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1927.

³³⁰ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1929.

³³¹ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1929.

worked by women.”³³² This welcoming of the family on plantations was part of a long-term plan to address the labor question.

Conclusion

The decline of French Cameroonian labor opened the door for Ibibio and Igbo migrants. Plantation statistics from 1928 indicate that there were 110 Ibibio and 36 Igbo laborers in British Southern Cameroon.³³³ In the same year, the Victoria Division accounted for only 4% of the total labor force in the area.³³⁴ These statistics suggest that local Cameroonians were unable to independently meet labor demands. By 1938, upwards of 2,509 Igbos and Ibibio were in Victoria, data that are representative only of this area where Igbo numbers at this time were minimal in comparison to Kumba, where the largest migrant population resided.³³⁵

This chapter explored the history of British Southern Cameroon from its time under German control to its integration into British West Africa. This incorporation altered life for both Cameroonians and Nigerians. This period was also defined by the presence of plantations and their ever-growing demand for able-bodied young workers. Migration became and would remain central in the relationship between Southern Cameroon and Nigeria. While Igbos were among some of the first laborers to arrive, they did not come alone. This chapter further analyzes how the decline of labor from the French Camerouns opened the door for Igbos to migrate to Cameroon in more significant numbers. Unable to sustain industrial plantation development independently, Cameroon was perpetually dependent on these migrant communities. Chapter II extends this analysis by addressing the social and economic factors that motivated Igbo men to become part of the circulatory out-migration, illegally to Fernando Po and legally to Southern Cameroon.

³³² *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1929.

³³³ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1929

³³⁴ *Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1929

³³⁵ Epale, *Plantations and Development*, 99-100

CHAPTER 2:
**ON THE ROAD TO CALABAR: LABOR IN FERNANDO PO, SOUTHERN CAMEROON,
AND THE BANANA BOOM, 1930-1945**

“The Ibo man is demonstrating the true caste of the African spirit. Within the margin of ten years, he has acquitted himself creditably in all walks of life with a dynamic force.”³³⁶ In 1941, this opening of “The Ibo Man as I Know Him” published in the *West African Pilot*, Joseph Okirikpi, masterfully articulated the state of the Igbo community and its future potential both within and outside the colonial structure. In his vision of the depth of Igboland’s potential, he speaks to how the innate skills defining colonial Igbo communities can be transitioned into their ability to govern a larger, central political state, thus foreshadowing Igbo potential freedom from the colonial yolk. As the Igbo migrated to Nigeria, Fernando Po, and Southern Cameroon, they gave life to the vision professed in “The Ibo Man as I Know Him.”

Igboland, positioned between the Niger and Cross rivers, is the ancestral home of the Igbo people. In the early 20th century, it boasted a population of 3,000,000 making southeastern Nigeria one of the most densely populated regions in British West Africa.³³⁷ The most substantial proportion of migrants hailed from the Owerri Province, with many leaving from Mbaise, the most densely populated area in Igboland.³³⁸ The wage economy empowered Igbo men to participate in both traditional and modern expressions of masculinity.³³⁹ In saving funds to pay for weddings and acquire titles, Igbo men participated in traditional forms of masculinity. Through purchasing modern products such as bicycles, western clothes, records, and building western style homes, they participated in modern forms of masculinity dictated by the colonial state. Igbo adaptability to new

³³⁶Joseph Okirikpi, “The Ibo Man as I Know Him,” *West African Pilot*, August 28, 1941.

³³⁷*Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929

³³⁸ *Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929

³³⁹Susan Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest: An Economic History of the Ngwa Region, South-Eastern Nigeria, 1800-1980*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)

environments made them an essential asset to the colonial project at each level, from manual labor to the civil sector.

Circulatory out-migration, as I use it in this dissertation, is the cyclical voluntary movement of Igbo people from their homeland as youths and their return in old age.³⁴⁰ It is highly dependent on the informal recruiting of nephews, nieces, cousins, sisters, and brothers from both paternal and maternal communities. While homes could be built and bought in Southern Cameroon and entire lives lived abroad, the intent of the migrants is always to return home.³⁴¹ Circulatory out-migration was fueled by ever more adventurous colonial developmental schemes and the introduction of the English wage economy, both new phenomena in 20th century Nigeria. Igbo willingness to embrace this wage economy allowed them to become an important labor pool from which manpower for colonial schemes was drawn. An odyssey from Owerri to Southern Cameroon led Igbo migrants to settle in Victoria, Kumba, Tombel, and Mbongo.³⁴² Calabar was their point of emigration, and in front of them lay both risk and reward as the Igbo men disembarked from their canoes or boats. The road to Calabar held two diverging paths, legal migration to Southern Cameroon or illegal migration to Fernando Po. Internal shifts within Igboland, illegal labor in Fernando Po, seasonal fishing, and banana cultivation, contributed to the growth of Igbo circulatory out-migration to Southern Cameroon. An analysis of Tom Shot fishing settlements nuances the question of who of these migrants were considered a stranger and who was not, highlighting how colonial investigations concerned with tax collection created issues between strangers and indigenous communities that previously did not exist. This chapter argues that a decline in migration of illegal

³⁴⁰Akin L. Mabogunje, "Agrarian Responses to Outmigration in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Population and Development Review*, Vol.15 (1989):324-342.

³⁴¹Akin L. Mabogunje, "Agrarian Responses to Outmigration in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Population and Development Review*, Vol.15 (1989):324-342.

³⁴²*Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929

labor to Fernando Po, coupled with the expansion of banana production, made Southern Cameroon the prime destination for men who left Owerri Province. This chapter also shows how the growing colonial preference for Igbo laborers came at the expense of Southern Cameroonians, a situation which consequently fostered intense stranger anxiety.³⁴³

Oral Tradition and Pre-Colonial Migration

Oral traditions highlight Igbo willingness to migrate, adapt, and incorporate new environments into the Igbo worldview. They detail Igbo migration both outwards as well as immigrants migrating into Igboland. In Eastern Igboland, the Ada, Ezza, and Ikwo routinely migrated northward.³⁴⁴ The Igala Kingdom in particular holds prominence in many Igbo oral traditions, each version incorporating valuable information about migration. In one version, Eri, is an Igala King, who settled in northern Igboland, married an Igbo wife, and their sons became instrumental in founding several important Igbo towns including Nsukka and Eha Alumona, whose tradition note that they were established by the union between the Igbo and Igala.³⁴⁵

Numerous Igbo communities trace their origination to the heroics of Chima, who in the 17th century took advantage of political dysfunction in the Benin Kingdom and led a great migration outward. Although the Benin Kingdom never conquered the Western Igbo, routine raids were common.³⁴⁶ Chima was either a victim of these raids, a Bini prince, or simply a Benin resident. No matter his origin, Chima's story is important in highlighting Igbo migration before colonial rule. As Chima led his people along the Niger River, he founded the towns known as

³⁴³ Christiane Harzig, *What is Migration History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).

³⁴⁴ Elizabeth Isichei, *The Ibo People and the Europeans: The Genesis of a Relationship to 1906*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1973), 29-30;

³⁴⁵ A.E. Afigbo, "Igbo Origins and Migrations," in *Groundwork of Igbo History*, eds. A.E. Afigbo, (Lagos: Vista Books, 1992), 49-50. Awka and Orlu oral tradition discuss the migration and establishment of Igbo communities southward into Delta State. Ndokki, found south of Ngwa, share an origin story with the Bonny Kingdom. Visitors to Bonny in the 19th century, were under the impression the city was founded by Igbos from the interior. The Ndokki and Ngwa migrations, were well known during the colonial period.

³⁴⁶ Isichei, *The Igbo and the Europeans*, 39-40.

Umuezechima.³⁴⁷ As Chima passed, those following him split into different directions, further establishing towns and cities. Oreze crossed the Niger and founded the city of Onitsha and Esumai, leading a separate party south, founded Ossissa and Ashaka. The parties then split again and founded Aboh. Following disputes in Aboh with the indigenous community, migrants were expelled and went on to establish the cities of Atani and Ogidi.³⁴⁸

The Aro personified the dominance wielded by Igbo communities who participated in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. While the Aro dominated the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the 18th century, the founding of their cities and their presence in the region existed prior.³⁴⁹ The Aros' location on the Cross River, their use of the oracle Ibinukpabi, and their formidable army struck fear in the hearts of many.³⁵⁰ However, an analysis of Aro oral tradition shows multiple references to the role of migration. Prior to founding the city of Arochukwu, the Aro lived as a migrant community.³⁵¹ Nna Uru, who led the Aro migrant community and took both an Igbo and Ibibio wife, lived in Obinkita, which was controlled by the Ibibio. Peace existed until Agwu, son of Nna Uru, went to war with the Ibibio, enlisting the services of Oke Nnachi, a powerful medicine man from Amasiri.³⁵² Oke Nnachi further enlisted the Ankpa from Akamkpa to aid Agwu in defeating the Ibibio.³⁵³ This oral tradition not only speaks not only to trends in pre-colonial migration but also to the interaction between indigenous and stranger communities.

³⁴⁷Isichei, *The Igbo and the Europeans*, 39-40; A.E. Afigbo, *The Igbo and their Neighbours*, (Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1987), 14-15.

³⁴⁸J.O. Ijoma, "The Western Igbo Before 1900," in *Groundwork of Igbo History*, eds. A.E. Afigbo, (Lagos: Vista Books, 1992), 334-335.

³⁴⁹J.O. Ijoma, "The Western Igbo Before 1900," in *Groundwork of Igbo History*, eds. A.E. Afigbo, (Lagos: Vista Books, 1992), 334-335.

³⁵⁰J. Okoro Ijoma and O.N. Njoku, "High Point of Igbo Civilization: The Arochukwu Period", in *Groundwork of Igbo History*, eds. A.E. Afigbo, (Lagos: Vista Books, 1992), 198-99.

³⁵¹Kenneth Dike, *The Aro of South-Eastern Nigeria, 1650-1980: A Study of Socio-Economic Formation and Transformation in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1990)

³⁵² Dike, *The Aro of South-Eastern Nigeria*,

³⁵³Dike, *The Aro of South-Eastern Nigeria*,)

In pre-colonial Igboland, the place of one's birth had a tremendous influence on the trajectory of their life as young men's prospects were tied to the occupations of the other men in their community. Awka men were "renowned throughout the Igbo country, and even beyond its borders, as clever blacksmiths."³⁵⁴ In his youth, an Awka boy was apprenticed to a professional blacksmith, allowing him to travel extensively throughout Igboland learning the craft until he could travel on his own.³⁵⁵ Work, allowed the young man to acquire titles, pay bride prices, and buy modern items. According to G. T. Basden, "by the time a youth is from twelve to fifteen years of age he has become expert in the occupations practiced by his elders, and he can take a full share in any work he is called upon to do. He knows how to build, to use a hoe and the machete, and generally to take his place as a useful member of the family and community."³⁵⁶ The point at which an Igbo man can work is essential in understanding why more young Igbo men arrived in British Southern Cameroon than any other group: the accumulation of wealth acquired under the colonial structure extended the power a man wielded in Igboland.

Oral tradition depicts the dimensions of migration and settlement before colonialism. Igbo communities addressed population density by establishing new towns and cities, thus addressing the pressure placed on the land naturally; however, colonialism, by demarcating what Igboland was which prevented communities from expanding the ways they had in the past.³⁵⁷ The military conquest of Igboland began in 1901 with the Aro expedition, followed in 1905 with the defeat of Ezza and in 1907 with the fall of Ngbo.³⁵⁸ Thus, by the second decade of the 20th century, Igboland

³⁵⁴G.T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria: An Account of the Curious and Interesting Habits, Customs, and Beliefs of a Little-Known African People by One who has For Many Years Lived Amongst them on Close and Intimate Terms*, (London: Seeley, Service and Co., Ltd), 78-79.

³⁵⁵Basden, *Among the Ibos*, 79.

³⁵⁶Basden, *Among the Ibos*, 79.

³⁵⁷A.F. Afigbo, "Colonial Conquest and Rule, 1900-1950: Igboland To the East of the Nigeria," in *Groundwork of Igbo History*, eds. A.E. Afigbo, (Lagos: Vista Books, 1992), 419-420.

³⁵⁸A.F. Afigbo, "Colonial Conquest and Rule, 1900-1950: Igboland To the East of the Nigeria," in *Groundwork of Igbo History*, eds. A.E. Afigbo, (Lagos: Vista Books, 1992), 419-420.

was under the British sphere of influence, a by-product of which repositioning of natal communities.³⁵⁹ Igbo men did not need to create new towns, and thus, a flow of money, people, and commerce developed that enhanced natal communities and cities throughout Southeastern Nigeria. Okirikpi espoused his vision of this modern Igbo man, who maintained a deep connection to communal roots:

When I see the Awka man at his foundry, I visualize African manufacturers and builders of aeroplanes, steamships, tanks, and munition. When I see the Nnewi man in his farm, I look forward to an African Henry Ford growing cars. When I see the Onitsha man in his market stall surrounded by his wares, I see a future Leverhulme of the Dark Continent. When I see the Aro Long Juju transformed into white man's juju (education), I see Africa emerging from the dark and lethargic plane stretching forth her hands to grasp a building and set her feet firm on the stepping ledge of her ambitious peak, crawling upwards slow but sure as the days go by. When I watch the Ngwo man with a cheerful look at work on the ridges of Iva Valley I observe a future Churchill of Africa thrusting body and soul towards the national goal.³⁶⁰

As Igbo migrated across Nigeria and then beyond its borders, they gave life to the vision professed in "The Ibo Man as I Know Him," which took direct form through Igbo circulatory migration.

Igbo Labor and Circulatory Out-Migration

In lamenting the state of the Owerri Province and its people in the *West African Pilot*, M. Jones Achonwa highlights the impact the tremendous amount of out-migration had on this area saying, "At present, Owerri people are scattered all over Nigeria; some have found their sojourn elsewhere profitable, while others are just drifting. If the government finds its way clear to give this undertaking a trial, Owerri sons, and daughters who have been scattered here and there, whether affluent circumstances or not, will soon return home to settle down."³⁶¹ Colonialism increased the number of men who could attain wealth, titles, and power in their communities.

³⁵⁹A.F. Afigbo, "Colonial Conquest and Rule, 1900-1950: Igboland To the East of the Nigeria," in *Groundwork of Igbo History*, eds. A.E. Afigbo, (Lagos: Vista Books, 1992), 419-420.

³⁶⁰ Joseph Okirikpi, "The Ibo Man as I Know Him," *West African Pilot*, August 28, 1941.

³⁶¹M. Jones Achonwa, "Owerri Province Requests Consideration," *West African Pilot*, January 21 1938.

While every Igbo man could not be a blacksmith, trader, or clerk, but every Igbo man could become a migrant laborer. Farming, fishing, and other occupations did not allow the same type of egalitarian wealth accumulation the wage economy offered.

Mbaise, located in the heart of Owerri Province, was a Native Authority Federation of five clans and measured 180-296 miles and boasted 1,000 people per-square-mile.³⁶² Mbaise, like the greater Owerri Province, it included an abundance of land but lacked the fertility to sustain its massive population.³⁶³ Thus, increasing numbers of Igbo men left the confines of Igboland in search of work. While men were often able to find this work, it took a toll on traditional forms of labor in Mbaise, with upwards of 24% to 62% of youths leaving in search of employment.³⁶⁴ As Edwin Ardener commented, “nowadays the desire for work abroad is becoming an expression of a desire for self-betterment in general, and for goods above the subsistence level.”³⁶⁵ The impact on Mbaise was first felt by farmers who depended on those youths to cultivate large tracks of land. Without these able-bodied men, they were no longer able to command a large labor force, resulting in key socio-economic changes occurred.³⁶⁶

Colonialism was an experiment in the process of physical and geographical exploitation: The land was exploited to benefit European firms and banks, and the people were physically explored as the bodies who pulled the valuable resources from the earth. The introduction of the European currency more than European goods increased the extension of European economic control. Across Nigeria, individuals came to terms with the new colonial worldview. The Igbos exploited the system of colonialism through sheer numbers and adaptability. While some could

³⁶²Dennis Ugochukwu, *The British Colonial Administration in Mbaise, 1900-1960*, thesis, Department of History, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, (June 1985), 1.

³⁶³Dennis Ugochukwu, *The British Colonial Administration in Mbaise, 1900-1960*, thesis, Department of History, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, (June 1985), 1.

³⁶⁴ *Socio-Economic Survey Owerri Province, Mr. E.W. Ardener*, NAE, OWDIST 7.1.8.

³⁶⁵ *Socio-Economic Survey Owerri Province, Mr. E.W. Ardener*, NAE, OWDIST 7.1.8.

³⁶⁶ *Socio-Economic Survey Owerri Province, Mr. E.W. Ardener*, NAE, OWDIST 7.1.8.

work internally as laborers, the restrictions placed on Igbos and the land meant everyone could not remain. This series of events led to Igbo circulatory out-migration. Under colonialism, Igbo migrants could not establish towns, nor become indigenous to an area. Instead, they lived as strangers leveraging the best economic opportunities afforded to them.³⁶⁷ Pre-colonial Igbo migration differs from modern Igbo migration, both by the impetus and distance that Igbos traveled. Migration was fluid before restrictions placed on Igboland by the British, who imposed control on the Igbo for the same reasons they did everyone else, to control the economic future of the region.³⁶⁸ The British defined the geographic limits of Igboland, preventing natural growth that had taken place throughout Igbo history. Migrant labor became a by-product of colonialism, benefiting colonialists because it guaranteed them a perpetual taxable labor force.³⁶⁹

The colonial Nigerian wage economy was born from the tin, timber, coal, and plantation industries.³⁷⁰ In 1927, there were 8,000 skilled/unskilled workers across Southern Cameroon plantations, 4,000 in the timber fields, and 38,000 in the tin mines.³⁷¹ While Nigeria never suffered from a lack of a workforce, the comfort level of this workforce did, with ethnic groups being more comfortable working in their communities.³⁷² According to a 1929 *Nigerian Military Report* “the voluntary wage-earning class is comparatively small.” due in part to Nigerian reluctance to venture far from established ethnic networks.³⁷³ Igbos, however, extended their networks across Nigeria, Fernando Po, and finally, into Southern Cameroon.

³⁶⁷Joseph Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906: Theory and Practice in a Colonial Protectorate*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

³⁶⁸Joseph Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906: Theory and Practice in a Colonial Protectorate*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

³⁶⁹Johnson Asiegbu, *Nigeria and its British Invaders, 1851-1920: A Thematic Documentary History*, (New York: Nok Publishers International, 1984).

³⁷⁰*Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929.

³⁷¹*Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929.

³⁷²*Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929.

³⁷³*Military Report on Nigeria*, 1929.

In 1915 in Udi Division, a contingency of Ngwo and Ogui chiefs ceded land to establish the Government Colliery in Enugu.³⁷⁴ Significant mining began the same year propelled by the extension of the Nigerian Railway.³⁷⁵ Colliery labor was primarily from the Udi Division, with chiefs being supplemented with a stipend for supplying the men necessary to keep the mines functioning via out-sourced agents locally called boss-boys.³⁷⁶ This process of labor procurement not only fostered corruption and abuses but also generated a preference for local Enugu laborers. In 1925, skilled miners from Owerri, Awka, and Onitsha went on strike as a result of pay reductions.³⁷⁷ In response the colliery manager increased the number of men trained for underground work. By the 1930s, a surplus of skilled laborers heightened the competitiveness of colliery jobs.³⁷⁸ The increased attractiveness of colliery work further limited the men who could attain these jobs. Thus, while the Enugu Colliery created many jobs and contributed to the growth of Enugu, Igbo men seeking work from outside the area were primarily locked out.

Igbos, from Owerri, were keenly aware of the impact that extensive out-migration could have on the area, leading to the fear that extensive migration could brand the province as an area devoid of production and modernization. M. Jones Achonwa lamented, “the people of Owerri would be grateful if the authorities will give consideration to the question of agriculture in a way that will improve the economic and industrial situation of Owerri Province.”³⁷⁹ The sentiment was that Owerri Province, while rich in people, lacked industrialization that kept young people home. The lack of modern industrialization drove young people to distant Nigerian provinces and

³⁷⁴Agwu Akpala, “The Background of the Enugu Colliery Shooting Incident in 1949,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (December 1965):335-363.

³⁷⁵Agwu Akpala, “The Background of the Enugu Colliery Shooting Incident in 1949,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (December 1965):335-363.

³⁷⁶Akpala, “The Background of the Enugu Colliery Shooting Incident in 1949.”

³⁷⁷Akpala, “The Background of the Enugu Colliery Shooting Incident in 1949.”

³⁷⁸Akpala, “The Background of the Enugu Colliery Shooting Incident in 1949.”

³⁷⁹M. Jones Achonwa, “Owerri Province Requests Consideration,” *West African Pilot*, January 21 1938.

abroad.³⁸⁰ In response to this situation Achonwa, referencing the concept of indigenously owned firms and industrial plantation, wrote, “it is hoped that the agricultural department which has been doing a lot of good work in Nigeria, will consider the suggestion of experimenting at Owerri on seed-cotton, cocoa, and ground-nuts. From such experiments which we feel will confirm our opinion of the richness of the soil, the planting of these commodities could be undertaken on a large scale.”³⁸¹ Achonwa did not receive a response from the Agricultural Department, and migration from Owerri Province increased, the allure of potential wealth from migrant labor prevailing over the dangers present as laborers embarked on the road to Calabar.³⁸²

Clandestine Migration to Fernando Po

Migrant labor was heaviest from the Owerri Province because it was the most densely populated area in Nigeria.³⁸³ In the 20th century, traditional labor avenues such as farming, trading, local crafts, and livestock tenancy were no longer enough to support a modern standard of living.³⁸⁴ The wage economy became the answer to how Igbo men could advance themselves under British colonialism. Victor Uchendu persuasively argued that territorial expansion, which had historically eased population growth, ended as a result of British administration.³⁸⁵ The initial response to the inability of Igboland to naturally expand was a transition from “agricultural to predominantly a trading migrant economy,” which became the primary domain of skilled young men.³⁸⁶ Able-bodied men who lacked industrial skills were “forced to seek paid labor in the farms, factories and

³⁸⁰M. Jones Achonwa, “Owerri Province Requests Consideration,” *West African Pilot*, January 21 1938.

³⁸¹M. Jones Achonwa, “Owerri Province Requests Consideration,” *West African Pilot*, January 21 1938.

³⁸²M. Jones Achonwa, “Owerri Province Requests Consideration,” *West African Pilot*, January 21 1938.

³⁸³ Victor Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 31-32.

³⁸⁴ Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southwest Nigeria*, 32.

³⁸⁵ Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southwest Nigeria*, 32.

³⁸⁶ Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, 31-32.

other workplaces outside their homes,” which constituted the genesis of the modern Igbo migrant labor force.³⁸⁷

Based on Nigeria’s inability to absorb the entirety of its unskilled laborers, Uchendu formulated three categories of Igbo migrant labor: Those who seek work in Igboland, those who seek work in Nigeria, and those who work outside of Nigeria. The Igbo in the second and third categories often lacked productive land for farming.³⁸⁸ The development of cities and infrastructure in Nigeria, coupled with density in Igboland, created an environment where circulatory out-migration was an attractive avenue. In leaving to work, save and send money home, Igbo men were able to not only attain titles but also the wealth which came to define colonial masculinity, which was within the colonial dialectic, Christianity, education, and the wage economy was expressed through the norms, values, and behavioral patterns dictated by the state.³⁸⁹

The colonial state went to great lengths to control how men, women, girls, and boys should act in an attempt to dictate the trajectory of the African family. Stephan Miescher foregrounded the experiences of Ghanaian men who matriculated through mission education, challenging the interpretation of masculinity being one-dimensional. Boys, in Mission Schools, were indoctrinated under a colonial ideology that dictated their masculinity. Consequently, they had to balance the duality of their identity, that of their traditional culture with that of the colonial ideology.³⁹⁰ Lisa Lindsay extended this argument by not only analyzing the role the railroad had on Yoruba masculinity but also the impact it had on Yoruba families.³⁹¹ Igbo migrants’ masculinity was not

³⁸⁷Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southwest Nigeria*, 32.

³⁸⁸ Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, 31-32

³⁸⁹Lisa Lindsay and Stephan Miescher, *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 4-5.

³⁹⁰Stephen Miescher, “The Making of Presbyterian Teachers: Masculinities and Programs of Education in Colonial Ghana,” in *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, eds., Lisa Lindsey and Stephan Miescher, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 91-92

³⁹¹Lisa Lindsay, *Working with Gender: Wage Labor and Social Change in Southwestern Nigeria*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 15.

one dimensional but rather a negotiation between traditional and colonial modes of masculinity.³⁹² The wage economy was the primary means through which Igbo men adopted and expressed their colonial masculinity.³⁹³ Orchestrated outside of Igboland, the act of moving was just as influential as the act of collecting a wage, both of which were used to express masculinity through the act of purchasing modern items such as bikes, clothes, shoes and other modern goods.³⁹⁴ Expressing themselves by flaunting money became the genesis of the contentious relationship between Igbo and Cameroonian communities.

Fernando Po, Gabon, Spanish Guinea, Ghana, and Southern Cameroon were the destinations which drew Igbo migrant labor.³⁹⁵ Other than British Southern Cameroon, Fernando Po was the largest area requiring migrant labor, making it the first stop for those Igbo men and women on the road to Calabar.³⁹⁶ The Bubi, indigenous to Fernando Po, decimated by disease and forced labor, were unable to meet the demands of industrial plantations. In the 1930s, the Igbo and Ibibio began arriving in more significant numbers.³⁹⁷ Fernando Po offered appealing wages to migrants unable to find work in Nigeria, though, the tiny island held a dark side, resorting to coercing and kidnapping laborers.³⁹⁸ Legal migration was an option but unattainable to all, thus driving many to use illegal networks, meaning Fernando Po became a destination known for excessive illegal labor, abuses, and rampant prostitution.³⁹⁹ The presence of both legal and illegal

³⁹² Lindsay, *Working with Gender*. 15

³⁹³ Lindsay, *Working with Gender*, 16.

³⁹⁴ Lindsay, *Working with Gender*, 16.

³⁹⁵ Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southwest Nigeria*, 30.

³⁹⁶ Samuel Daly, "Dropped Subjects: Igbo Labor Migration to Fernando Po, 1940-1974," *Igbo Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (November 2013): 1-15.

³⁹⁷ Samuel Daly, "Dropped Subjects: Igbo Labor Migration to Fernando Po, 1940-1974," *Igbo Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (November 2013): 1-15.

³⁹⁸ Samuel Daly, "Dropped Subjects: Igbo Labor Migration to Fernando Po, 1940-1974," *Igbo Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (November 2013): 1-15. By 1960, Nigerians amounted to 85,000 of the 100,000 population of Fernando Po.

³⁹⁹ Samuel Daly, "Dropped Subjects: Igbo Labor Migration to Fernando Po, 1940-1974," *Igbo Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (November 2013): 1-15.

populations in Fernando Po became an issue for Nigerian colonial officials tasked with looking after a large migrant population in a foreign colony.

Colloquially, migration to Fernando Po was called *Panya*, referring to removal to an unknown place and embodying all the negative possibilities that could befall migrants.⁴⁰⁰ Enrique Martino has argued that *Panya* was the most extensive smuggling and trafficking enterprise in West Africa during the colonial period.⁴⁰¹ Most of these laborers were employed on cocoa plantations, the primary industry on the island producing 2% of the world's supply; however in 1930, the International Labor Organization (ILO) barred Fernando Po from legally recruiting labor.⁴⁰² Liberians, who had previously composed the bulk of the island's labor force, went elsewhere and the ILO effectively led a global boycott by branding Fernando Po as "the island of no return."⁴⁰³ As a result, the attention of the planters turned to solidifying the illegal networks, which would now provide the bulk of the island's labor.

Illegal recruitment placed laborers in a precarious situation because they were less likely to come forth and allege maltreatment and criminal enterprises surrounding illegal recruitment reached the highest political and social levels in Fernando Po and Calabar.⁴⁰⁴ Similar to migrants heading to Southern Cameroon, Fernando Po migrants came mainly from Owerri and Calabar Provinces because their population density, with illicit recruitment being controlled by former

⁴⁰⁰ Enrique Martino, "PANYA: Economics of Deception and the Discontinuities of Indentured Labour Recruitment and the Slave Trade, Nigeria and Fernando Po, 1890s-1940s," *African Economic History*, Vol. 44 (2016): 91-129

⁴⁰¹ Enrique Martino, "PANYA: Economics of Deception and the Discontinuities of Indentured Labour Recruitment and the Slave Trade, Nigeria and Fernando Po, 1890s-1940s," *African Economic History*, Vol. 44 (2016): 91-129

⁴⁰² Enrique Martino, "Clandestine Recruitment Networks in the Bight of Biafra: Fernando Po's Answer to the Labour Question, 1926-1945," *IRSH*, 57, (2012):39-72.

⁴⁰³ Enrique Martino, "Clandestine Recruitment Networks in the Bight of Biafra: Fernando Po's Answer to the Labour Question, 1926-1945," *IRSH*, 57, (2012):39-72.

⁴⁰⁴ Enrique Martino, "Clandestine Recruitment Networks in the Bight of Biafra: Fernando Po's Answer to the Labour Question, 1926-1945," *IRSH*, 57, (2012):39-72.

laborers, traders and professional canoe merchants and Calabar elites controlling the largest segment of the trade, employing both canoes and steamers.⁴⁰⁵

Nigerian men could easily find themselves whisked away to Fernando Po, and once there, these kidnapped men were trapped under quickly drawn, low-paying contracts while their kidnappers were paid handsomely for their efforts.⁴⁰⁶ Anele Nwosu of Ameke, Owerri Division, and Elijah Chiolu of Umuochita Diobu, Ohoadia Division, recounted their ordeal to the British Vice-Consulate in Santa Isabel, Fernando Po:

We were at Nwaniba, Uyo, as part-time labourers to U.A.C. and at other times as petty traders. One Abriba man advised us to accompany him to Victoria as traders. The two of us conjointly bought 100 yams (£5), two bags of crayfish (£1.16/-) and two tins of palm oil (18/-). We all embarked on a canoe at Nwaniba. To our surprise, the Abriba man (Eni) clandestinely brought us to Fernando Po and contracted us to work for Aselope at Biapa. It was on the 23rd December that we arrived here, contracted the same day and taken to Biapa the same day.⁴⁰⁷

Anele and Elijah's ordeal represents a norm that engulfed Fernando Po and Southeastern Nigeria. The colonial government responded by criminalizing the illegal transport of people and goods to and from Fernando Po; however, the threat of fines and imprisonment did not deter canoemen from making illegal trips to Fernando Po.⁴⁰⁸ The allure of money and established migrant networks overcame the threat of being caught and police began arresting men at increasing rates.⁴⁰⁹ To deter migration to Fernando Po cases of kidnapping frequently dotted Nigerian newspapers such as the *West African Pilot*.

⁴⁰⁵ Enrique Martino, "Clandestine Recruitment Networks in the Bight of Biafra: Fernando Po's Answer to the Labour Question, 1926-1945," *IRSH*, 57, (2012):39-72. Southern Cameroon was location which placed a premium on migrants arriving with wives and beginning families. In contrast Fernando Po, was a male centric space that placed a premium on men who were willing to work. Enrique Martino has shown that while many women departed under the guise of being a wife or daughter, a system of prostitution developed which many of these women fell into

⁴⁰⁶ Illegal Recruitment, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464

⁴⁰⁷ *Illegal Recruitment*, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464

⁴⁰⁸ *Illegal Recruitment*, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464

⁴⁰⁹ *Illegal Recruitment*, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464

On 2 October 1941, splashed across the *West African Pilot* front page was a significant case of kidnapping that occurred between August 27 and 31. Samuel Okone of Abiriba, recruited six canoemen to transport 18 men to Victoria.⁴¹⁰ It was not clear whether the men desired to go to Victoria for work or trade. More than likely, it was a combination of both, which was the case in many instances of men who sought canoemen for transport to Victoria. On August 30th, the party reached Obeoigang where the 18 passengers were locked in a house and quickly became alarmed about their now precarious circumstance. The next morning, the passengers were loaded into the canoes again but were now destined for Fernando Po. The party was not long at sea when Alfred Bokolo, the Isongo Police Constable, accompanied by two officers, came upon them. In a flurry, six canoemen jumped into the ocean and successfully swam away. Samuel Okone was captured as his attempt to flee failed.⁴¹¹ Mr. Bokolo found documentation in the canoes indicating that the passengers were to be taken to Fernando Po for labor and Samuel Okone was taken before Magistrate C.J. Pleaes and sentenced to 12-months in prison.⁴¹²

On 20 December 1944, twenty-eight canoemen were convicted of going to Fernando Po without “permit from [the] proper authority.”⁴¹³ While canoemen were the most commonly caught perpetrators, they were not alone. Canoemen, at the bottom of the cartel born from illegal migration, were the easiest to catch. In addition the lure of smuggled goods coming from Fernando Po enticed less scrupulous policemen; the *West African Pilot* reported that “three constables were recently placed in charge of a police station a few miles from [Victoria] in order to check the practice of smuggling goods from Fernando Po into this country.”⁴¹⁴ However, “later reports were

⁴¹⁰“Man, Who Recruited Labourers Illegally is Gaoled 12 Months,” *West African Pilot*, Oct. 2, 1941.

⁴¹¹ “Man, Who Recruited Labourers Illegally is Gaoled 12 Months,” *West African Pilot*, Oct. 2, 1941.

⁴¹²“Man, Who Recruited Labourers Illegally is Gaoled 12 Months,” *West African Pilot*, Oct. 2, 1941.

⁴¹³“Canoemen Plying Fernando Po Without Permit Are Convicted,” *West African Pilot*, January 13, 1945.

⁴¹⁴ “3 Policemen on Duty Engage in Smuggling,” *West African Pilot*, February, 7, 1945.

to the effect that these police constables were themselves engaged in the smuggling practice.”⁴¹⁵ During a surprise inspection, the Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police found the reports to be accurate. After taking a leave of absence, each of the policemen abruptly retired.⁴¹⁶

In 1949, Nigeria and Fernando Po signed a treaty barring the transport of laborers between the two territories.⁴¹⁷ However, it did little to stem the tide of migration as cartels had grown to such proportions that they reached Fernando Po’s political elite. In the spring of 1953, Samuel Johnson, a “canoe-master brought five men [to Fernando Po] by telling them that he was going to take them to a place in Nigeria where they could obtain work.”⁴¹⁸ In reality, he sold the men to Don Luis Gras, the Chairman of the Chamber of the Agriculture Labor Committee, who then bribed a clerk in the Spanish Labor Department to produce the proper paperwork.⁴¹⁹ The Nigerian Governor-General fined Don Luis Gras 100,000 pesetas, while Samuel Johnson was sentenced to a one-year imprisonment.⁴²⁰

Similarly, in 1953, W.M. Bradley, British Vice-Consul, and Labour Officer, uncovered further cases of illegal recruitment that implicated the Fernando Po elite. Sumco, owned by Rosello, Spanish Vice-Consul in Calabar, was caught illegally contracting three Nigerians. Sumco was fined 60,000 pesetas.⁴²¹ Benito Ewuem worked as the middleman between Barber Ayebu and James Osie, the canoemen, who were given one-year prison terms after which they were expelled from Fernando Po.⁴²²

⁴¹⁵“3 Policemen on Duty Engage in Smuggling,” *West African Pilot*, February,7, 1945.

⁴¹⁶ “3 Policemen on Duty Engage in Smuggling,” *West African Pilot*, February,7, 1945.

⁴¹⁷ *Illegal Recruitment*, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464.

⁴¹⁸*Illegal Recruitment*, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464.

⁴¹⁹ *Illegal Recruitment*, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464.

⁴²⁰ *Illegal Recruitment*, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464.

⁴²¹*Illegal Recruitment*, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464

⁴²² *Illegal Recruitment*, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464.

The primary distinction between labor in Fernando Po and Southern Cameroon was recruiting. Laborers in Fernando Po were recruited through legally established channels to work for no more than 13 months.⁴²³ In contrast, Southern Cameroon did not rely on formal recruiting nor pre-established contracts. Recruiting occurred through word of mouth or informal communal networks.⁴²⁴ Informal recruiting worked to the benefit of the colonial state because it meant that the government did not need to create formal transport facilities, provide medical inspections and repatriation arrangements, nor oversee contract rights and work conditions, all of which were required for laborers in Fernando Po.⁴²⁵

Fernando Po and Spanish Guinea depended heavily on Nigerian labor.⁴²⁶ While legal provisions were in place to control and curtail abuses, they were challenging to detect and, when detected, never stemmed the tide of migration.⁴²⁷ Cases of illicit recruitment highlight the complexity of underground systems. Fernando Po elite orchestrated a criminal enterprise in spite of the Nigerian treaties.⁴²⁸ While public opinion viewed Fernando Po as a dangerous colony, men in search of work continued to make the journey. Southern Cameroon offered all the possibilities not found in the Enugu Colliery or Fernando Po. Unlike the Enugu Colliery, Southern Cameroon did not prize one ethnic group or community over another. The most significant concern of the plantations became the willingness of laborers to remain and hopefully recruit others. Fernando Po, as a foreign colony, was outside the purview of British authority and subsequently generated tax problems, a situation from the British viewpoint that was unacceptable.⁴²⁹ On the other hand, in Southern Cameroon, laborers could be both paid and appropriately taxed.

⁴²³ Illegal Recruitment, CALPROF, NAE, 7/1/464.

⁴²⁴ Labour Conditions in West Africa, report by Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, (1941), 47.

⁴²⁵ Labour Conditions in West Africa, report by Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, (1941), 47.

⁴²⁶ Labour Conditions in West Africa, report by Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, (1941), 47.

⁴²⁷ *Labour Conditions in West Africa*, report by Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, (1941), 47.

⁴²⁸ Labour Conditions in West Africa, report by Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, (1941), 47.

⁴²⁹ Labour Conditions in West Africa, report by Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, (1941), 47.

Igbo circulatory out-migration became the defining undercurrent of the colonial period, representing not only the first level of such movement for Igbos but Nigerians as well. Igbo circulatory out-migration was propelled by a combination of expanding industrial plantations, as well as fostered by the Igbo sentiment to move beyond Igboland in search of work. Since the 1920s, Igbos relayed to those in their natal communities the opportunities plantation work offered.⁴³⁰ Thus, informal recruiting was essential in creating a stream of consistent migration.

Tom Shot Fishing Settlements

Prior to and during the colonial period, Igbos and Ibibios were seasonal migrants to the Rio del Rey fishing estuaries, which they referred to as Tom Shots.⁴³¹ An analysis of the Igbo and Ibibio in the Tom Shots extends the reach of circulatory migration, showing that such migration was more in line with normal activity than a new occurrence. Moreover, these fishing towns help explain the rise of xenophobia that gained momentum during the 1961 Cameroonian plebiscite. Igbos and Ibibios were always considered strangers in the Tom Shots. However, it was not until colonial officials laid claim to the area that the presence of strangers became a problem for Cameroonians.⁴³² Fishermen hailed from Eket, Uyo, Bonny, Port Harcourt, and other parts of Nigeria, and the Rio del Rey formed the boundary line between Calabar and Bimbia-Bakweri, the area where the fishing town was located.⁴³³ Though the Tom Shots were claimed by the Bakweri “no Bakweri people or natives of Cameroon resided there [there was] and little or no communication between the fish towns and the nearest Bakweri villages.”⁴³⁴ The Tom Shots

⁴³⁰ Labour Conditions in West Africa, report by Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, (1941), 47.

⁴³¹ Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴³² Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴³³ Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴³⁴ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE. A brief statement on the Rio del Rey Fishing Towns is found in Edwin Ardener, *King on Mount Cameroon: Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast, 1500-1970*.

boasted thirty settlements “of varying size, composed of groups of individuals with no village organization.”⁴³⁵

During the height of the rainy season from June to October, they were deserted as men and women returned home. Mr. F. Ferguson, the Victoria D.O., bluntly expressed the colonial sentiment about the fishing towns, questioning “who ought to collect the fish towns tax.”⁴³⁶ To address this issue, a colonial inquiry was convened to determine if Calabar or Victoria, the sole purpose of which was to decide who had the authority to collect Tom Shot taxes.

This history of the Tom Shots and the land surrounding them is complex. Around 1450, the Efik founded the Kingdom of Bakassi, which over time, became incorporated into the political sphere of Old Calabar.⁴³⁷ During the German period, the Rio del Rey was the inter-colonial boundary that separated Cameroon and Nigeria. King William Billa, the grandfather of Manga Williams, asserted control along the coast up to Bamuso, with the fishing towns on the immediate periphery.⁴³⁸ At the time, there “were then people from Calabar trading and fishing down the coast, but no attempt at permanent settlement or to claim the land as Efikland was made.”⁴³⁹ During this time, an agreement was reached between the “Duke family in Calabar and William Billa to regard the Rio del Rey estuary in the middle of the Mangrove swamps as a limit of control.”⁴⁴⁰ The estuary was a haven for smugglers and men avoiding paying German fishing taxes.

The Tom Shots, which played an instrumental role in the local economies of both Nigeria and Cameroon, were a part of the broader artisanal small-scale fishing industry that supplied fresh

⁴³⁵*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE

⁴³⁶*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴³⁷*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴³⁸ Chinyere Blessing Maduka, *National Interest and Foreign Policy: A Case Study of Nigeria-Cameroon Border Crisis (Bakassi Peninsula) 1975-2007*, Thesis, Department of History & International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, (September 2008), 7

⁴³⁹*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE

⁴⁴⁰*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE

and dry fish to Cameroon and Nigerian markets.⁴⁴¹ The use of canoes and traditional fishing techniques curtailed over-fishing. As strangers, Igbo and Ibibio men arrived with the permission of communities who laid claim to the Rio del Rey.⁴⁴² The Bakole and Balundu were the nearest Cameroonian communities to the fishing towns, and as one Bakole headman remarked, “these fishermen and traders have always obtained permission.”⁴⁴³ Those permitted by the Bakole fished in the swamps south of the Meme River.⁴⁴⁴ The Bakole and Balundu were the nearest Cameroonian communities to the fishing towns. Fishermen asserted no ownership of the land. Colloquially, their purpose in the Tom Shots was to “fish and to fish hard.”⁴⁴⁵ Daily routines involved leaving at dawn and returning at dusk to clean the daily catch, and it was a general rule that “those who catch shrimp are regarded as permanent settlers,” implying they returned year after year to the same Tom Shots, unlike fishermen who focused on other types of fish and moved to new settlements each season.⁴⁴⁶

The Resident of the Cameroons Province concluded that the Rio del Rey “should be administered from Calabar” though because of the rainy season and absence of many fishermen, the decision was not implemented until they returned.⁴⁴⁷ As fishermen learned of the decision, they had mixed feelings.⁴⁴⁸ Seven Chiefs from the Fishing Towns dictated a response to the Victoria D.O. The letter dictated and signed by Chief Abasi Efiom of Abana, Chief Asuquo Efiom of Atabong, Chief Nkpeti Umana of Ine Odiong, Chief Umana Asuquo of Ibuot Utan, Chief Asuquo

⁴⁴¹Amiye Francis, Francis David Sikoki, C.N. Onwuka, “Status of Fisheries Resources of the Niger Delta, Nigeria and Management,” in *Fisheries Resources: Sustainable Exploitation and Contribution to the Nigerian Economy*, eds. Amiye Francis and Francis David. Sikoki, (Port Harcourt: Port Harcourt Press, 2016), 39.

⁴⁴² *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁴³ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁴⁴ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁴⁵ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁴⁶ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁴⁷ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁴⁸ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

Edet of Ine Atayo, Chief Ibok Enwin of Usuk Efiat and Chief Eyifa Ekpentun of Inua Abasi.⁴⁴⁹ They began by saying, “for generation past, we have been cutting these Mangroves to do all our work of building houses as fuel to carry out shrimp fishing pursuits, which is our only hard-work when we go to these Tom Shots.”⁴⁵⁰ As this opening suggests, the fishermen positioned themselves as occupants of the fishing towns long before the colonialization of the area. It speaks further to the fishermen’s moderate use of the land. This reference to land use was a direct response to the Forestry Department, which had made overtures to claim the Rio del Rey as a Mangrove Reserve.⁴⁵¹ Doing so would make fishing illegal and displace the entire migrant fishing community.

Tom Shot fishermen viewed themselves as traders who only cut mangroves for “domestic use.”⁴⁵² From their perspective, this barred them from needing a license because their entire purpose in the Tom Shot was fishing: “We would call attention to the fact that the only purpose for which we go to Tom Shot, is for work; out of which labour we are able to pay taxes both at home and at the fishing towns. And any extra levy would be most killing.”⁴⁵³ The intensity of fishing in the Tom Shot did not leave men with much time for anything else as the entirety of each day involved catching, cleaning, and selling fish.⁴⁵⁴ Colonial officials initially proposed creating a Native Court in Ine Abana, near the Tom Shots.⁴⁵⁵ However, the fisherman masterfully articulated the reasons why a Native Court at Ine Abana should not exist:

That we see no reason for the act. All the people at the Tom Shot fishing town, come from Calabar Province and only resort to these places during certain seasons of the years for the sole purpose of fishing-which is carried on day and night. The fishers at Ine Odiong come from James Town. Abana, from Akpabuyo. Inua Abasi, from Ibino. Ine Atayo, from

⁴⁴⁹ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁵⁰ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁵¹ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁵² *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁵³ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁵⁴ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁵⁵ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

Enwang, and so through all the fishing towns. Everyone with their houses and families at their respective towns from whence they come and to where they return at the close of every fishing season. In fact, there is some part of the year when no single soul could be found in any of these fishing towns according to our Native Law and custom. All must return to their homes leaving their fishing huts behind. If a court is established at Ine Abana, who is to be responsible for same at such times?⁴⁵⁶

Establishing a Native Court in the Tom Shot would unnecessarily divert the men's attention from their sole purpose of fishing. Disputes in the Tom Shots were handled internally, with "capital cases" being referred to the Native Court at the end of the season.⁴⁵⁷ In addition, Tom Shots, while in the Cameroonian sphere, had little to do with Cameroon. H. O. Anderson, the Kumba D.O., conducted a hurried ten-day visit to the Tom Shot and spoke with the Issangeli elders in an attempt to learn if the Tom Shots came under their control as it had been discovered that eleven Tom Shots resided on Issangeli land.⁴⁵⁸ The Issangeli elders admitted that fishermen were "accustomed to visit parts of Issangeli and barter their fish and will sometimes marry an Issangeli girl," but they had no extensive contact.⁴⁵⁹ Issangeli elders laughed at the idea of moving their Native Court from Oron to Ine Abana because the Tom Shots populated by Igbo and Ibibio fishermen, were located on the periphery of the Bakweri and Issangeli.⁴⁶⁰

The Bakole did not object to the actions of Igbo and Ibibio fishermen, meaning any objection would have come from Manga Williams, who, like his father King Billa, claimed the stretch of the coast as far as Bamuso.⁴⁶¹ The Bakole asserted that "they were the first to show the Calabar fishermen where they could settle. Indeed, it is stated at Bamuso that this permission was given 10 or 11 generations ago, and it was also added that annual tribute in the shape of goats and

⁴⁵⁶*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE*

⁴⁵⁷*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE*

⁴⁵⁸ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

⁴⁵⁹*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

⁴⁶⁰ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

⁴⁶¹*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

yams,” was still being paid.⁴⁶² The term *Abana* is a contraction of the Bakole word “*jabani* meaning boundary.”⁴⁶³ However, the Issangeli became concerned with the actions of the Igbo and Ibibio fishermen in Fishing Towns that fell under their domain.⁴⁶⁴ Oron fishermen paid dues to the Issangeli based on long-established relationships and the Issangeli used the historical paying of tribute for the use of the land to assert their control. It was alleged that “settlements of Ekois, Ibibio’s and Igbos have not paid and are beginning to settle down and oust the Issangeli from fishing in the fishing towns.”⁴⁶⁵ The Issangeli asserted exclusive rights over the Fishing Towns in their area and Abana, Atabong West, Atabong East, and Akpok were fishing towns full of Igbos and Ibibios, who neglected to pay dues to the Issangeli.⁴⁶⁶

By not paying their tributes, Igbo and Ibibio fishermen fostered resentment among the Issangeli.⁴⁶⁷ The size of Tom Shots makes it possible that perhaps their tributes had been paid to the Bakole, who were content with the amount paid to them.⁴⁶⁸ However, the matter was never settled because of the clear delineation of land ownership was never fully established. Several Cameroonian communities claimed the Tom Shots, which meant the fishermen were torn between multiple communities competing for the annual payment.⁴⁶⁹

In the coming decades, this resentment would grow into xenophobia. In 1948, the Bakweri attempted to prevent Igbo from entering the fishing trade, which entailed barring the selling of fish to Igbo traders and preventing Igbo canoes easy access to the waterways.⁴⁷⁰ Tom Shot fishermen

⁴⁶² *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE

⁴⁶³ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE

⁴⁶⁴ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁶⁵ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁶⁶ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁶⁷ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁶⁸ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁶⁹ *Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.

⁴⁷⁰ Victor Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in the British Cameroons, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1990):281-293.

responded to Issangeli allegations bluntly, stating, “no fish town settlement has any dealings with the Issangeli, or with each other, and no visits of any kind are exchanged. Everyone is too busy.”⁴⁷¹

By 1934, it was clear that neither Victoria Division nor Kumba Division could easily administer over the Rio del Rey.⁴⁷² The location of the Rio del Rey offered natural access from Calabar.; however, because Cameroon was a mandated territory, the Nigerian government needed official permission from the League of Nations to transfer the Rio del Rey to Calabar, an expensive undertaking requiring the reports that made it clear either Bakweri or Issangeli did not claim the territory.⁴⁷³ The Issangeli made it clear they did not want to be administered as part of the Calabar Province.⁴⁷⁴ In the colonial mindset, opening Rio del Rey would require a significant financial commitment though such action might result in displacing the fishermen.

In 1934, the Ndian Estate, controlled by the United Fruit Company, set its sights on exploiting the Rio del Rey.⁴⁷⁵ It proposed using the Meme River to export palm oil and bananas, requiring a port be built in the Rio del Rey to handle the flow of trade.⁴⁷⁶ Lobbying from the Ndian Estate, introduced the prospect of turning the Rio del Rey into its own district or province in the mind of Mr. F. Ferguson, Cameroon Resident. Ferguson supported the creation of a Rio del Rey port to appease the Ndian Estate and to address “smuggling of tobacco and cigarettes, and [the] extraordinary smuggling of Japanese goods, through the Rio creeks.”⁴⁷⁷ Although the Rio del Rey never became into its own district, the entire area remained a vital nexus point between Southern Cameroon and eastern Nigeria.

⁴⁷¹*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

⁴⁷²*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

⁴⁷³*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

⁴⁷⁴*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

⁴⁷⁵*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

⁴⁷⁶*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

⁴⁷⁷*Administration of Fish Towns, Victoria Division, Cameroons Province, CSE 1/85/478, NAE.*

The Banana Boom and Stranger Anxiety

T. M. Yesufu argued that there were two types of labor migration in Nigeria, migratory labor and migrant labor.⁴⁷⁸ The migratory laborer leaves home only during the dry season or when crops do not need to be harvested.⁴⁷⁹ Men in the Tom Shots fit within this category as they regularly spoke about living in two places. The migrant laborer travels long distances in search of paid work. On distinction concerning the migrant laborer is their status; they do not fully integrate themselves into their new community.⁴⁸⁰ The migrant laborer still views his village as his home and routinely sends remittance back to assist where needed.⁴⁸¹ The banana industry depended on these migrant laborers to revive the dilapidated plantations.

The global depression precipitated a trade slump that pushed Nigerian traders into action. Cocoa and palm producers debated combining their crops to achieve the best market price because they were angered that firms continued to buy them at lower prices, while firm products remained at the same price and even rose in certain instances.⁴⁸² The depression contributed to several public UAC layoffs. In 1938, introducing palm plantations in Southeastern Nigeria was seriously considered, with the *West African Pilot* taking the initiative in proposing what these palm plantations could take: “One plan which might be suggested to meet the decreasing revenue is the expansion of our palm plantations.”⁴⁸³ It was further reported that

it is rather strange that although the number of Native-owned plantations had almost been doubled during the year, yet the quantities of the palm products exported had decreased considerably. It would appear from this that the Natives, not satisfied with the present system of price dictation, have held back a large number of their

⁴⁷⁸T.M. Yesufu, *An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962),116.

⁴⁷⁹ Yesufu, *An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria*, (116.

⁴⁸⁰ Yesufu, *An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria*

⁴⁸¹ Yesufu, *An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria*

⁴⁸² Yesufu, *An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria*

⁴⁸³“Palm Plantations,” *West African Pilot*, March 11, 1938.

products. This would not be strange, especially when the attitude of the pool men is taken into consideration.⁴⁸⁴

The *West African Pilot* urged the Agricultural Department to look into the expansion of plantations in Nigeria.⁴⁸⁵ The distinction, in this case, is that plantations would be native-owned, with the goal being the establishment of co-operative societies. Thus, no man would labor “in vain for profiteers to benefit.”⁴⁸⁶

From its inception, the *West African Pilot* promoted the farming and export of oranges and pineapples.⁴⁸⁷ However, by 1938 the *West African Pilot* artfully promoted the farming and export of bananas, which had proven viable in Southern Cameroon.⁴⁸⁸ Migrant laborers had developed the skills needed to plant, harvesting, and load bananas, skills essential if the call made by the *Pilot* was answered at it noted that “as yet it would seem that nobody has given the question of trying bananas any serious consideration.”⁴⁸⁹ The issue with farming bananas along “proper lines” was the investment and expertise that would be needed. French Cameroun had exported 3,000,000 bunches of bananas, all destined for European markets, and the *West African Pilot* assured its readers that banana production for the determined man would provide a uniquely profitable venture.⁴⁹⁰

The Southern Cameroon banana industry began in 1910 when the African Fruit Company (AFC) imported banana suckers from Costa Rica.⁴⁹¹ In 1927 in Tiko, the Guatemala Plantation Company (GPC) and the AFC attained a monopoly in the banana industry, even reaching into

⁴⁸⁴“Palm Plantations,” *West African Pilot*, March 11, 1938.

⁴⁸⁵ “Palm Plantations,” *West African Pilot*, March 11, 1938.

⁴⁸⁶ “Palm Plantations,” *West African Pilot*, March 11, 1938.

⁴⁸⁷ “Banana Plantation,” *West African Pilot*, March 17, 1938.

⁴⁸⁸ “Banana Plantation,” *West African Pilot*, March 17, 1938.

⁴⁸⁹ “Banana Plantation,” *West African Pilot*, March 17, 1938.

⁴⁹⁰“Banana Plantation,” *West African Pilot*, March 17, 1938

French Cameroon and Fernando Po.⁴⁹² The GPC and AFC were the first companies to commercially produce exportable bananas in West Africa.⁴⁹³ The AFC owned and ran a deep-water pier, which shipped bananas to Hamburg, Germany.⁴⁹⁴ The banana boom became an essential development in Cameroon, which like West Africa and the world, began to feel the effects of the global depression. Germany's demand for both dried and fresh bananas led to an increase in demand for migrant labor.⁴⁹⁵ Simultaneously, the growth of the GPC and AFC, along with other plantations across Cameroon, continued to strain Cameroonians control over their land. The British outlawed recruiting but did little to return land taken from Cameroonians during the German era. The period between 1930 and 1945 is marked by an increased stranger presence as well as Cameroonian discontent born from the marginalization experienced on their land by international corporations.⁴⁹⁶

Labor during this time was connected to global trends, and any decline in global demand had an immediate impact on life across Nigeria and Southern Cameroon. Plantations in 1930 included 9,040 laborers, a significant decrease compared to the previous year.⁴⁹⁷ Several plantations “fell into financial difficulties towards the end of the year” and impacted not only the number of laborers they could hire but also the consistency of the pay.⁴⁹⁸ By the mid-1920s, banana cultivation was more important than cocoa and palm oil, beginning with exporting 65 tons of dried

⁴⁹²*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/242, NAE.

⁴⁹³ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/242, NAE.

⁴⁹⁴ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/242, NAE.

⁴⁹⁵ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/242, NAE.

⁴⁹⁶*Victoria: Southern Cameroons, 1858-1958*, (Victoria: Basel Mission Book Depot, 1958), 66-67.

⁴⁹⁷ Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons, 1930.

⁴⁹⁸*Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons*, 1930.

bananas to Hamburg.⁴⁹⁹ By the beginning of the 1930s, fresh and dried shipments were routine and banana production was instrumental in assisting Southern Cameroon in weathering the storm of the global depression. The banana industry allowed plantations, now under German ownership, to turn a profit.⁵⁰⁰

On the morning of 5 October 1931, the newly appointed Governor to Nigeria, Sir Donald Cameron his wife, Lady Cameron, arrived in Victoria to tour British Southern Cameroon. On the steamer from Lagos to Victoria, Sir Donald read the Forestry Petition forwarded from Manga Williams and other Victoria District Heads:

2. We beg to express our sincere thanks to the government for having purchased land from the plantation companies to enable us to live.
3. Forestry Ordinance. We again beg most humbly but earnestly for reconsideration of certain regulation under the forestry ordinance for the following reasons:
4. Practically all our land has been seized and given to European companies. The rest has been apportioned among the villages with the full understanding that these are reserved for the sole existence of the native and each native, according to the native law and custom, claims his farm and all that grows on it as his own. This does not only refer to cultivated plants but also includes original trees standing thereon.
5. Iroko trees are admittedly scarce, but we have a few which we have specially preserved for ourselves, our successors and to assist those who farms do not contain this tree, and we are forbidden the use of this tree under free permit.
6. We beg to ask that we natives may apply and receive, without the present great difficulty, free permits for the 1st and 2nd class trees (including iroko) growing on our land, and that once the permit has been granted, we may be able to assist our brother Bakweris or sell the plants left over to others without further interference.
7. Times are hard, and we should like to be allowed the surplus timber from the 40 trees already lying in the bush or felled under future free permit without paying a license fee. The plantation companies can do what they like about their tree without paying fees and we are poorer than they are.
8. As our district has no railways or rivers, we are not traders but agriculturists who are solely dependent on land and its products. If we are deprived of the rights of using all that the land produces, it will only tend to ruin us financially and retard the progress of our districts.

⁴⁹⁹ Report on the British Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons, 1930.

⁵⁰⁰ Epale, *Plantations*, 103; John A. Houtkamp, *Tropical Africa's Emergence as a Banana Supplier in the Inter-War Period*, (Avebury: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1996), 20.

9. Education. We humbly beg to request His Excellency to approve the employment in Victoria of one of our daughters namely Miss Jubuline Steane who is the first Bakweri woman to possess a Third-Class Teachers Certificate. We are in need of a female teacher to teach our girls in the Government School, Victoria.

10. Trade Depression and Unemployment. As the country is now suffering from the effect of trade depression and unemployment, we beg His Excellency to devise some means that will enable the people to make an income that will enable them to meet the present demands of their present and future upkeep and those of the government.⁵⁰¹

In Victoria, Sir Donald met formally with the District Heads as well as Mr. F. S. Collier, the Conservator of the Forest. Mr. Collier “urged the advisability of collecting the usual fees except where a person applied to cut a tree for his own domestic use.”⁵⁰² The District Heads, supported by the Resident, argued “the best of their forest had been taken from them and were being exploited free of any fees by plantation companies.”⁵⁰³ The District Heads wanted the same liberal treatment for harvesting trees that plantations enjoyed. As it currently stood, Cameroonians were prohibited from using timber for local trade or export without permits. Plantation companies held thousands of acres of land, much of it in its virgin state, land that they reserved the right to develop at their leisure, exporting timber for-profit and then farming it. To make matters worse, the Forestry Department began to restrict the land under its control, dictating to Cameroonians that only fallen trees be used for domestic use. While anger for the forestry policy was voiced by Victoria District Heads, it was a sentiment felt across Cameroon.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE.

⁵⁰² *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵⁰³ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵⁰⁴ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE

Sir Donald was inundated with serious questions about how the administration planned to address the depression.⁵⁰⁵ Responding honestly, Sir Donald admitted that “he was unable to offer assistance to anyone province or district and in view of the general depression affecting the whole country he was compelled to retrench many persons from employment in the public service and works.”⁵⁰⁶ A forward-thinking D.O. “suggested that the best hope of assisting Victoria Division against the depression lay in the new banana industry and that he had obtained from the African Fruit Company some thousands of Banana suckers for distribution among native farmers.”⁵⁰⁷ The sentiment among D.O.’s was that the banana industry could do for Cameroon what the cocoa industry had done for Ghana. Since banana farming was new, appropriate methods needed to be taught. The largest market for banana exports remained in Germany, but for farmers to reap the impactful financial benefits, new domestic markets needed to be opened.⁵⁰⁸

Sir Bernard Henry Bourdillon became Governor of Nigeria in 1935, and the following year embarked on his tour of Southern Cameroon.⁵⁰⁹ On the morning of 27 March 1936 in Victoria, Sir Bourdillon was greeted by District Chief Manga Williams along with other District Heads. Meeting in the Victoria Native Appeal Court, the District Heads questioned Sir Bourdillon about how the state could ease the continued impact of the depression.⁵¹⁰ Sir Bourdillon, commented that “government of itself could not improve prices which were dependent on factors outside Nigeria

⁵⁰⁵Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵⁰⁶*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵⁰⁷*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE.

⁵⁰⁸ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE.

⁵⁰⁹Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE.

⁵¹⁰Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE.

and outside Cameroon.”⁵¹¹ He continued, “in spite of the fact that the prices now ruling for oil product and cocoa were slightly less than those which were being paid a year ago prospects for trade were distinctly hopeful. All over the world, there are signs of trade improvement. This meant an increased volume of trade and less unemployment.”⁵¹² From the Cameroonian perspective, the state continued to fail them in three major areas, first, the plantations remained in control of the most fertile land, forcing many to live on reservations. Secondly, the forestry policy meant that Cameroonians could not fully use the abundance of timber at their disposal, and finally, the government failed to protect the people from the economic downturn.⁵¹³ On the periphery yet slowly moving to the forefront was the increase in the numbers of strangers who flaunted cash and disrespected indigenous customs.⁵¹⁴

On Saturday, 21 March 1936, Sir Bourdillon toured the AFC and the Likomba Plantation in Tiko.⁵¹⁵ At the AFC, Sir Bourdillon saw for the first time the process of harvesting dried and fresh banana. Discussing what he had witnessed, he observed that the, “bananas that become too ripe for export or are in excess of the quantity that a ship can take are dried and packed in boxes for the Swiss and German market. Banana chips are also dried on the cocoa drying pans and exported as cattle feed.”⁵¹⁶ Likomba Plantation was run by Mr. Blaich, whom Sir Bourdillon

⁵¹¹*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE.

⁵¹²*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE.

⁵¹³ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE.

⁵¹⁴ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428, NAE. In his private writings Sir. Bourdillon, noted the following about Manga Williams, “A live wire who really seems to do a job of work.”

⁵¹⁵ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵¹⁶*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

described as “an Americanized German with an American wife.”⁵¹⁷ Blaich was building a modern home on the estate along with a small airfield.⁵¹⁸ The banana industry produced wealth for plantation owners but continued to lock out Cameroonians who held traditional ownership of the land, causing resentment, exacerbated by the global depression.⁵¹⁹

The banana industry significantly increased the arrival of strangers in Southern Cameroon.⁵²⁰ At the height of the depression, strangers were able to obtain well-paying jobs. Grievances against the actions of strangers rose to such importance that in 1936 during Sir Bourdillons’ tour, the Balong held a meeting to discuss their contempt.⁵²¹ The Balong notified Sir Bourdillon of the following stranger issues:

It was customary for the Balong people to give land to strangers for the purpose of growing crops for their subsistence, that a tendency had developed for these strangers to grow on the land, crops the produce of which they sold e.g. cocoa, and when leaving the area, a stranger would sell the land to another stranger without any reference to the Balong people. His excellency surmised that it was not the land that the stranger sold to another stranger but the trees of economic value which he had planted and tended on the land and enquired why a stranger should give back this crop which he had raised for nothing. The District Head replied that it was right that he should do so as he had been warned not to plant money crops but only subsistence crops. His Excellency enquired from the Resident what security of tenure strangers obtained for the land allotted to them and the Resident replied that they obtained no documentary title whatsoever.⁵²²

⁵¹⁷*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵¹⁸*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵¹⁹*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵²⁰*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵²¹*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵²²*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

Sir Bourdillon ended the meeting, stating he “sympathized with them but that it appeared to be a matter which they themselves could deal with.”⁵²³ Resentment toward the actions of strangers increasingly became a major political issue. In failing to side with the Balong, Sir Bourdillon validated the actions of strangers in the Balong view. Strangers, who farmed money crops and sold the land without Balong approval, were disregarding native customs. Moreover, strangers were realizing a profit, which was not returned to the Balong. Linked with the struggle propelled by the depression, Igbos were stereotyped as being hard-working, creative, arrogant, and concerned only with money.⁵²⁴

The mentality of Igbo strangers in Southern Cameroon was developed by the *West African Pilot* writings that in the 1930s propagated an aggressive nationalistic form of economics. While the stranger problem centered on the increased arrival of Igbo and Ibibio migrants, it was rooted in economics. Igbos were able to obtain an early monopolistic grip on inter-colonial trade; not limited to Southern Cameroon, as it reached into Ghana and across British West Africa.⁵²⁵ The significance of inter-colonial trade was detailed in the pages of the *West African Pilot*. Using gari, a quick selling commodity that could fetch a high price when resold, as an example, the *Pilot* expertly narrated how inter-colonial trade could benefit an enterprising small merchant. The *Pilot* noted that “a bag of gari at Lagos cost from 6 to 8 shillings which on the Gold Coast and other remote parts of Nigeria it cost as much as from 15 to 17 shillings.”⁵²⁶ The profit margin was attractive and held the possibility of transforming the petty trader into a man of economic means.⁵²⁷

NAE ⁵²³*Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE 1/86/2428,

114. ⁵²⁴T.M. Yesufu, *An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962),

⁵²⁵ “Inter-Colonial Trade,” *West African Pilot*, April 12, 1938.

⁵²⁶ “Inter-Colonial Trade,” *West African Pilot*, April 12, 1938.

⁵²⁷ “Inter-Colonial Trade,” *West African Pilot*, April 12, 1938.

Similar instances splashed across the pages of *Zik Press* and were put into action by enterprising Igbo traders in Southern Cameroon.

The *Pilot* provided additional advice on how traders could not only sell various products but tailor certain commodities to the environment in which they are trading:

Our inter-colonial traders should give the question of the need of each colony a deep thought and so arrange to supply those parts needing certain materials from those having an abundance of it. A good trader is not the man who just buys and sells but he who is able to give very deep thoughts to the needs of certain people at certain times and so supply the articles just where and when needed. We do not see the European houses exporting large consignments of shoes, raincoats and other finished materials to all parts of the provinces as they do to important towns like Lagos.⁵²⁸

Sir Bourdillon next met with a collection of Kumba Native Administrators about the prospects of the re-organization of Native Administrations.⁵²⁹ District Head, Chief Mukete, offered a formal greeting on behalf of all those present.⁵³⁰ Privately, Sir Bourdillon wrote, “in general, the inhabitants of the southern part of the Cameroons seem rather listless and lifeless. They pay their taxes well, and never have any complaints, but they have no drive, and I doubt if any Native Administration here will ever be really active unless there is some keen individual, as the Victoria District Head, to keep things going.”⁵³¹ The Victoria District Head, of whom he spoke kindly, was Manga Williams. Sir Bourdillons’ perception of the Cameroonian people highlights why he did not side with the Balong in their stranger dispute. Further, his characterization of Cameroonians

⁵²⁸ Inter-Colonial Trade (2), *West African Pilot*, April 13, 1938.

⁵²⁹ Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵³⁰ Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵³¹ *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

as “listless and lifeless” was counter to the Igbo, who were seen as driven, hardworking, and full of ingenuity.⁵³²

The outbreak of World War II stripped Germans of their plantation ownership and ended banana shipments.⁵³³ The precarious state of banana exports pushed colonial administrators to seek to open new markets. On 9 October 1939, an unnamed Messrs agent boarded the Elder Dempster Line at Victoria disembarking at Calabar, bringing “1 dozen sample cases of dried bananas,” the first of many more sold in Calabar.⁵³⁴ The bananas were shipped as they would be for the European market in a wooden box protected with wax paper. The Supervisor of the Plantations begged the Calabar Resident to take steps to interest “the public in your province in dried bananas.”⁵³⁵ Twelve cases of dried bananas were handed to the UAC, which subsequently put them up for sale in Calabar’s markets and the Calabar Resident responded that “the bananas were sold for appropriately seven to ten per half-penny, and I am informed [they] are greatly appreciated by children.”⁵³⁶ The Calabar Resident was confident 20 cases could be sold in Calabar.⁵³⁷ The Supervisor of Plantations felt the banana price-point did not cover the packing cost, but that a change in packing could make selling them more economical.⁵³⁸ However, selling 20 cases of bananas was a far cry from the height of banana exports when tons of both fresh and dried bananas were shipped to Hamburg.

World War II altered the Nigerian gaze outward, making the production of crops important for the war effort. Palm oil became a commodity vital to the success of the war. School children

⁵³² *Proceedings of Meeting with H.E. The Governor During His Visit to Cameroons Province*, CSE, 1/86/2428, NAE

⁵³³ *Dried Banana Industry*, CALPROF, 3/1/23/99, NAE.

⁵³⁴ *Dried Banana Industry*, CALPROF, 3/1/23/99, NAE.

⁵³⁵ *Dried Banana Industry*, CALPROF, 3/1/23/99, NAE.

⁵³⁶ *Dried Banana Industry*, CALPROF, 3/1/23/99, NAE.

⁵³⁷ *Dried Banana Industry*, CALPROF, 3/1/23/99, NAE.

⁵³⁸ *Dried Banana Industry*, CALPROF, 3/1/23/99, NAE.

in the Owerri Province believed “that every nut cracked, [was] a crack on Hitler’s head.”⁵³⁹ Palm oil was an important lubricant for ships, tanks, planes, and guns.⁵⁴⁰ Focus on crops, important for the war effort, began to supersede the relevance placed on domestic products.⁵⁴¹ Demand for vital products to aid the war effort meant that non-enlisted men were needed on Cameroon plantations.⁵⁴² Unlike WWI, Cameroon plantations were not in disarray but fully functioning.

On 14 November 1940, the Resident of Calabar sent the following priority telephonic message to Mr. J. Macrae, the District Officer of Kumba, “some 200 Efik, Ibo and Ibibio labourers discharged from plantations in Cameroons expected to arrive Ikang today. Further parties are expected to arrive by plantation launches, lighters, etc., at intervals of about two days. I cannot guarantee to inform you of the date of arrival of other parties but will do my best.”⁵⁴³ Mr. J. Macrae did not have long to wait. On 18 November 1940, the following message was received: “about 300 more labourers arrive [at] Ikang either tonight or tomorrow morning. More may arrive towards end of week.”⁵⁴⁴ The 500 men who arrived in November represent a new wave of Igbo and Ibibio men in Southern Cameroon. These men arrived in more significant numbers for two reasons. First, the need for more bodies to produce commodities for the war effort, with palm oil being the most important. Secondly, they arrived in more significant numbers because of the Nigerian-centric focus of the Cameroon Plantation Department now in control of the plantations.

The 500 Igbo and Ibibio who arrived in Kumba in the Fall of 1940 were not an anomaly as Igbo and Ibibio men continued to be informally recruited. One such laborer, Donatus Ikekwem, was informally recruited from Umuchieze in Mbaise to work for the CDC, beginning on a banana

⁵³⁹*News for Nigerian Soldiers Over-Seas*, ABADIST, 1/26/955, NAE

⁵⁴⁰*News for Nigerian Soldiers Over-Seas*, ABADIST, 1/26/955, NAE

⁵⁴¹*News for Nigerian Soldiers Over-Seas*, ABADIST, 1/26/955, NAE

⁵⁴²*News for Nigerian Soldiers Over-Seas*, ABADIST, 1/26/955, NAE

⁵⁴³*Cameroon Plantation Labourers*, CALPROF, 3/1/2589.

⁵⁴⁴*Cameroon Plantation Labourers*, CALPROF, 3/1/2589

plantation in 1947, initiating a 40-year residency for him in Southern Cameroon.⁵⁴⁵ Because there were no set policies for recruiting, those men recruited informally were often provided a path to promotion. Such was the case for Ikekwem in 1958, and his story is an important reference point for the system in the years prior: “As they changed from banana to palm in 1958, they sent me for Nigeria to come bring people. I brought about 12 men, grown-up people, so they go work for CDC. And all of them take them as full workers. So as they came they made me a fulltime keeper, that is a clerk. So I worked so because of that I got people from Nigeria.”⁵⁴⁶ Each young man who went to Cameroon to work was one less soldier. This situation angered colonial officials who preferred to see young men enlist in the military.⁵⁴⁷ Mr. F. B. Carr, the Chief Commissioner of the Eastern Provinces, speaking on behalf of the Education Committee, emphasized, “that boys with a standard VI pass were urgently needed for the army, for training at the Technical School at Enugu, and that he would not like to see them attracted away from the army by the plantation scheme.”⁵⁴⁸ The plantation scheme, as it came to be called under the Cameroons Plantation Department valued Nigerian bodies over Cameroonians.⁵⁴⁹ Because the men who supervised the Cameroons Plantation Department were transferred from Nigeria, they used established contacts and their understanding of the Nigerian landscape to recruit from a dense pool of laborers.

The plantations and the growth of banana production transformed Southern Cameroon into a region characterized by a large body of wage earners.⁵⁵⁰ The allure of a wage pulled Igbo migrants to migrate in ever-expanding numbers. Migrant networks were established prior, but the demand for bananas and then crops for the war effort meant these migrant networks became far

⁵⁴⁵ *Cameroon Plantation Labourers*, CALPROF, 3/1/2589

⁵⁴⁶ Donatus Ikekwem, *Oral Interview in Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria* James K. Blackwell, Jr, May 27, 2016.

⁵⁴⁷ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF, 9/1/1139.

⁵⁴⁸ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF, 9/1/1139.

⁵⁴⁹ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF, 9/1/1139.

⁵⁵⁰ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF, 9/1/1139.

more solidified. The establishment of migrant communities created resentment among Cameroonian Native administrators.⁵⁵¹ Rather than properly addressing these issues, colonial officials, through post-war planning agenda, drew in more Igbo migrant labor, and at the close of the war the banana industry received a second boom from English demand, and a direct steamer service was established from Tiko to England.⁵⁵²

Post-War Development Boards Discussions of the Future

As Dr. Okekpe traveled from Aba to Tiko, the Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Board (CPC) held its first group of meetings from Wednesday, 12 January through Saturday, 15 January 1944.⁵⁵³ The purpose of the CPC and similar boards was to envision and put into motion mechanisms that would shape post-war Nigeria.⁵⁵⁴ In doing so, these boards offer a window into new factors contributing to Igbo migration. Official members present included Mr. P.G. Harris, the Senior Resident, as well as divisional district officers. Unofficial members included prominent Cameroonians, Manga Williams, Chief G. M. Endeley, Mr. R. J. Dibonge, and Mr. N. M. Bebe.⁵⁵⁵ According to Mr. Harris, the purpose of the CPC was to influence “post-war planning in [Cameroon]” such that it propelled Southern Cameroons development as well as integrate it with Nigeria even though the two countries were not physically linked at this point.⁵⁵⁶ Preliminary discussions had explored the direction of a potential road to link them, but until it was built, the only method of traveling from Cameroon to Nigeria was via steamship or canoe.⁵⁵⁷ In

⁵⁵¹ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF, 9/1/1139.

⁵⁵² *Labour Conditions in West Africa, report by Major G. St. J. Orde Browne*, (1941), 43,72.

⁵⁵³ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁵⁴ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁵⁵ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁵⁶ *News for Nigerian Soldiers Over-Seas*, ABADIST, 1/26/955, NAE; *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139. While the original name was the Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Board, in later documents it was renamed the Cameroon Provincial Committee. Documents have not indicated what brought about the name change.

⁵⁵⁷ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

addition, committees, consisting of official and unofficial members, generated reports on communication, education, health, and plantation development including recommendations that would guide Cameroon during and after the war.

World War II accelerated the transformations already occurring across Cameroon: “Buea in normal times is a very different proposition to what it is today. The need for numbers of people to spend local and long leave in Buea will not arise after the war and there will be few permanent residents. I think eight to ten permanent residents was the normal establishment before the war,” remarked R. B. Longe, the General Manager of Cameroon Plantations.⁵⁵⁸ The war accelerated the growth of Buea, Kumba, Victoria, and Mamfe.⁵⁵⁹ Permanent residency, an idea pushed in the 1930s, became grounded reality due to the demands of war. Longe may have believed that the cities would return to the way they had been, but he would be proven wrong. The population of permanent residents grew, and many were Nigerian strangers.⁵⁶⁰

Mr. Longe, as the General Manager of Cameroon Plantations was deeply concerned about the plantation in a post-war world, envisioning four possible options: the plantations could potentially operate under government control or be run by a large plantation company, by individual owners, or by the former German owners.⁵⁶¹ This final option, which had occurred following WWI, was entirely out of the question. At the outset of the war, the plantations were found to be in a deplorable state. It was noted that labor camps “were constructed of bush material.”⁵⁶² More deplorable from the British perspective was the lack of separation between qualified men and the general labor pool.⁵⁶³ Reports indicated that the great “distinction between

⁵⁵⁸*Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF, 9/1/1139

⁵⁵⁹ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁶⁰ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁶¹*Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁶²*Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF, 9/1/1139.

⁵⁶³*Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

overseers and time-keepers was, as a general rule, confined to allotting these people two rooms in labourers camps.”⁵⁶⁴ British colonials chose to empower these men by housing them separately from general labor.⁵⁶⁵ However, German owners were not concerned with such separation of labor, something important to British officials. Taking control of the plantations, the colonial government established football fields and all several African club teams.⁵⁶⁶ The measures were all meant to manage the plantations during the war, though a committed investment could not be implemented as the future of the plantations remained in doubt.

As New Year’s celebrations brought an end to 1945, the shortage of imported goods became a topic of discussion for the Cameroon Provincial Development Committee.⁵⁶⁷ According to MacDonald, “that labourers now have plenty of money to spend but nothing to spend it on. In this province, all middlemen and traders are strangers; these men travel [across] the plantations and induce the labourers to pay enormous prices for goods, which he could buy far cheaper in the factories, by bringing them to his door.”⁵⁶⁸ World War II increased the activities of long-distance Igbo traders across Cameroon as they brought products wholesale in Nigeria and Cameroon and sold them in plantations and cities.⁵⁶⁹ The actions of Igbo middlemen and traders were purely economic. Working for the plantations offered good pay. However, working for oneself as a trader in both Nigeria and Cameroon brought in more money than any plantation salary.⁵⁷⁰ In post-war Southern Cameroon, Igbo middlemen and traders became an expanding fixture.

⁵⁶⁴ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF, 9/1/1139.

⁵⁶⁵ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁶⁶ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁶⁷ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁶⁸ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF, 9/1/1139.

⁵⁶⁹ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁷⁰ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

Permanent stranger settlements in Kumba, Tombel, and Mbongo routinely challenged indigenous communities.⁵⁷¹ Many strangers were young men with expendable cash, and their actions became the personification of colonial ills and mismanagement in Southern Cameroon.⁵⁷² Mr. W. F. H. Newington, the Kumba District Officer, recommended a series of changes for the division, which he alleged smacked “of the Soviet system,” further saying that “unless the people as a whole are made to work experimental plots, rural health centers and the like are of small avail.”⁵⁷³ Villages were be compelled to clear land to produce exportable crops, as well as for grazing livestock. Those present during the meeting largely supported the recommendations. Chief Mukete raised a point in asking “whether the government would advance money for the purchase of machinery such as a palm production plant and sawmills.”⁵⁷⁴ Mr. Newington responded, “provided the scheme was approved, financial help would in all probability be given.”⁵⁷⁵ In Nigeria, a robust loan scheme for the Pioneer Oil Mills had already proven to be effective, and any form of financial aid would more than likely rely on the blueprint of southeastern Nigeria.⁵⁷⁶

The Kumba Development and Welfare Board addressed this problem stating that “the Kumba strangers at present were mainly Grassfield and Igbo.”⁵⁷⁷ The Grassfield owing to racial affinity were longer established and were jacks of all trades, the Igbos were largely concerned with petty trading.”⁵⁷⁸ In Kumba, those from both the Grassfield and Igbo held land rent free.⁵⁷⁹ As Mr. Newington argued, that “the superior industry and initiative of the strangers would eventually

⁵⁷¹ Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁷² Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁷³ *Cameroon Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139.

⁵⁷⁴ *Cameroon Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139.

⁵⁷⁵ Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁷⁶ Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁷⁷ Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁷⁸ *Cameroon Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139.

⁵⁷⁹ Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

swamp the local inhabitants unless they bestirred themselves.”⁵⁸⁰ The periphery of the meetings included the actions of Fulani herders who significantly increased the population of cattle in Manenguba.⁵⁸¹ The boards agreed that the success of the Calabar-Cross River-Cameroons Development Plan would address the influx of Kumba strangers, diverting them to other locations.⁵⁸²

The Cameroons Provincial Committee met in the Magistrates Court in Victoria to discuss labor wage rates in Southern Cameroon, with similar meetings also occurring in Owerri and Ogoja.⁵⁸³ Serious questions about what defined a living wage took precedent at the close of World War II.⁵⁸⁴ Those employed during the war and decommissioned soldiers increased demands on the state to raise wages. R. J. Hook, the Chairman and Resident, stated the “committee was to review such matters as the local price of foodstuffs, commodities and other costs of living factors with a view to considering whether the present labour wage rates required alteration, with particular relation to the present rate of [the cost of living allowance] COLA.”⁵⁸⁵

The Eastern Area Development Committee, which held its third meeting on the 21 of February 1946 at the Government Lodge, Enugu discussed the future of Southern Cameroons plantations, one of its important concerns. Although no definite plans were developed all agreed that under no circumstance would plantations be sold to German-financed firms.⁵⁸⁶ The Resident of Cameroons opened the meeting with the following statement:

Until decisions had been taken on the highest (indeed, on the international) level, discussion on this topic would be fruitless, but agreed to the request of Mr. Hook that the view of the Cameroons Provincial Committee be recorded that the presence uncertainty about the future of the plantations was having a most depressing effect on the morale of

⁵⁸⁰ *Cameroon Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139.

⁵⁸¹ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁸² *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁸³ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁸⁴ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

⁵⁸⁵ *Cameroon Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF, 9/1/1139

⁵⁸⁶ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, RIVPROF 9/1/1139

African and European employees, that recruitment of European officers to supplement the present staff of fourteen (supervising 14,000 labourers) was impossible, that some plantations were closed and the machinery lying derelict, that the banana plantation (a lucrative asset) was not being worked and that the profits of the whole understanding were being credited against German liabilities. The Provincial Committee had stressed the impossibility of the present supervisory staff keeping in touch with subversive movements among the large labour force and that this was a potential source of trouble.⁵⁸⁷

The plantations were purchased by the Nigerian Government under the auspices of the Custodian of Enemy Property Act and vested under the control of the Governor, at which point they were leased to the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), which was given sweeping control not only over the land but over the control of laborers and staff.⁵⁸⁸ The CDC controlled the importing and exporting of all materials, shipping agencies, wharfs, warehousing, manufacturing, building, fishing, and stockbreeding.⁵⁸⁹ Additionally, the CDC was in charge of the religious, educational and general social welfare of its employees as well as in control of the CDC medical services through hospitals in Ekona, Mukonge, Tiko and Bota.⁵⁹⁰

Conclusion

At the beginning of the 1930s, the road to Calabar involved two interrelated paths, yet by the close of WWII, Southern Cameroon stood alone as the migrant magnate. During the course of the war, Southern Cameroonians moved from embracing strangers to critiquing them for actions they perceived as rude or immoral. Apprehension toward stranger populations was not isolated to Southern Cameroon. In Owerri, antagonism for strangers grew to such a point that it formed the Owerri Strangers League (OSL), which on 7 April 1941 petitioned for a meeting with the Senior District Officer: “In the petition, they alleged that a by-law had been enacted which prohibited

⁵⁸⁷ *Cameroons Development Corporation*, CALPROF 3/1/2588

⁵⁸⁸ *Cameroons Development Corporation*, CALPROF 3/1/2588

⁵⁸⁹ *Cameroons Development Corporation*, CALPROF 3/1/2588

⁵⁹⁰ *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration. Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council*, 1958, 23.

strangers from entering any bush or forest to collect firewood and further complained that their boys, girls, and women had been assaulted while their matchets were always forcibly seized.”⁵⁹¹ It was further alleged that no firewood was sold in Owerri, thus preventing strangers from cooking food. The OSL, further asserted that “the crops they planted on land on which they pay rent were confiscated and they have been forbidden to plant anything on them.”⁵⁹² The OSL hoped that the D.O. would open an investigation to validate the basis of the petition.

Owerri seems to be a seething pot and many times complaints of various kinds have emanated from that region. But this time, the complaint which comes from that town is a unique one because it cuts through the whole foundation of the relationship of the different peoples who live together in towns, villages, and hamlets scattered all over this country. It concerns the relationship between indigenous people of a place and the strangers within their gates.⁵⁹³

These words constitute the beginning of the *Pilots* critique of Owerri for how it had treated its stranger population as it posed the following questions: “why is it necessary for a by-law to be made to prohibit strangers from going into the bush to fetch firewood, as alleged in the petition? What do those who made the by-law in question want the strangers to do since there is no place where firewood is sold at Owerri, as affirmed by petitioners?” It continued, “if the Owerri people are allowed to have their way in this matter, what is the guarantee that others in the various provinces will not take the same step against Owerri strangers and others who live within their gates?”⁵⁹⁴ The *Pilot* concluded “whether from Owerri, Ondo, Calabar or any other Province, we are all Nigerians and should be free to live in peace anywhere in Nigeria. So long as things like this are permitted to happen at all anywhere, so long will the unity of the various groups in this

⁵⁹¹“Strangers’ Union of Owerri Petitions the District Officer,” *West African Pilot*, April 7, 1941.

⁵⁹²“Strangers’ Union of Owerri Petitions the District Officer,” *West African Pilot*, April 7, 1941.

⁵⁹³“Strangers at Owerri,” *West African Pilot*, April 10, 1941.

⁵⁹⁴“Strangers at Owerri,” *West African Pilot*, April 10, 1941.

country be impossible.”⁵⁹⁵ Questions of unity and who belonged to the land, stranger or indigenous, were inquiries that came to define the decade following the war. As stranger populations became more entrenched and circulatory migration more routine, the stranger problem moved from a peripheral issue to a central one.

⁵⁹⁵“Strangers at Owerri,” *West African Pilot*, April 10, 1941.

CHAPTER 3:
**“EMPLOY OUR SPIRIT”: CIVIL SERVANTS, LABOR PROTESTERS, STRANGER
ANXIETY AND THE 1953 EASTERN HOUSE CRISIS**

On February 4, 1938, the Ogidi Unity Meeting provided a warm send-off for Frank Achebe, the OUM assistant secretary and “sub-inspector of lines, Post and telegraphs” in honor of his transfer to Southern Cameroon.⁵⁹⁶ During the meeting, Mr. A. N. Ajose remarked, “the Ibos among all other tribes are the most tenacious in purpose, and though not easily offended, they are very aggressive.”⁵⁹⁷ Thanking the OUM for the event, Mr. Achebe told them “to keep the ‘Inwellian flag’ the flag of patriotism flying.”⁵⁹⁸ Mr. E. Ojechi, the OUM President, concluded the meeting by offering Mr. Achebe the following advice for his travels: “you know very well you are a Nigerian and more so an Ibo and mostly an Inwellian, an aboriginal son of Ogidi. Employ our spirit at your disposal in knowing the right path to follow in this new sphere of your work.”⁵⁹⁹ The celebration lasted until midnight and concluded with prayers. Driven by their “tenacious” spirit, Igbo civil servants made their presence known in the social, economic and political Southern Cameroonian life.⁶⁰⁰

The departure of Frank Achebe, the eldest of the Achebe family, provides a glimpse into the anxious determination in educated Igbo migrants. Civil servants had no control over postings but answered the call of the colonial state and their family to make the best of their circumstances. The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), established in 1947, was the largest importer,

⁵⁹⁶Ogidi Unity Meeting Gives Warm Send-Off to Mr. Achebe,” *West African Pilot*, February 4, 1938.

⁵⁹⁷“Ogidi Unity Meeting Gives Warm Send-Off to Mr. Achebe,” *West African Pilot*, February 4, 1938.

⁵⁹⁸“Ogidi Unity Meeting Gives Warm Send-Off to Mr. Achebe,” *West African Pilot*, February 4, 1938.

⁵⁹⁹“Ogidi Unity Meeting Gives Warm Send-Off to Mr. Achebe,” *West African Pilot*, February 4, 1938.

⁶⁰⁰Tara Reyelts noted the following as it relates to the importance of the Inwellian Flag and Ogidi. Ezechuamagha was the founder and father of Ogidi. His son who named Inwelle had a son named Ogidi. Subsequently, Ogidi had four sons for which the four quarters of Ogidi are named after.

exporter, and job creator in Southern Cameroon.⁶⁰¹ Its size enabled it to absorb large numbers of Igbo migrants and decommissioned soldiers, consequently increasing the stranger population. This history of Igbo migration extends far beyond the confines of the CDC. In Southern Cameroon, even though they were also strangers, civil servants were above plantation laborers and seasonal fishers because they held the added caveat of power backed by the colonial state.⁶⁰² Their perceived power added to the belief of an “Igbo Scare,” with others going so far as to label the Igbos as “Black Imperialists.”⁶⁰³

Civil Servants emigrated from Ogidi, Owerri, Okigwe, Asaba, Calabar, Onitsha, and Lagos, making new homes in places such as Tiko, Kumba, Victoria, and Buea. Through the *West African Pilot*, civil servants and traders stayed in contact with one another and their families using the *Provincial News* to celebrate births, marriages, deaths, promotions, and community outreach as well as the arrival and departure of friends and newcomers.⁶⁰⁴ Through the quotidian experiences of civil servants and traders, this chapter extends the narrative of Igbo migrants beyond the CDC and pushes back against the perception that they were “Black Imperialists.” For civil servants and traders alike, Southern Cameroon was a land of opportunity. No one entered Southern Cameroon with malice in their hearts. This quotidian interpretation of the lives of civil servants and the actions of labor protestors supports the egalitarian nature of life in Southern Cameroon. Pushing back against the notion that Igbo strangers were stereotypically self-centered and money hungry, this chapter narrates how colonial mismanagement of the stranger question contributed to

⁶⁰¹ Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293

⁶⁰² Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293

⁶⁰³ Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293; Anthony Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons: Vital Lessons for Cameroon*, Denver: Spears Media Press, 2016), 79.

⁶⁰⁴ “Migration of Civil Servants,” *West African Pilot*, July 19, 1941

regionalism, xenophobic stranger anxiety and ultimately the 1953 Eastern House crisis, which divided politically Eastern Nigeria and set in motion the 1961 Plebiscite.

Life and Times of Civil Servant in Southern Cameroon

In 1941, Nnamdi Azikiwe, who at this time was beginning his political and newspaper empire, observed the following about the Nigeria wage-earner: “no government can justify its existence in any community which has a majority of wage-earners in its population unless it has convincingly demonstrated that the lot of wage-earners under its aegis is desirably judged by the general level of the standard of living of the whole community.”⁶⁰⁵ Azikiwe continued, stating Nigerian wage-earners were well taken care of only if appropriate “education, employability, wages, conditions of work, welfare of employees, termination of employment, transport facilities, rest and recreation, pensions and gratuities, unemployment benefit, workmen’s compensation, overtime wages, collective bargaining, and labour legislation” were assured.⁶⁰⁶ Azikiwe's vision for the Nigerian wage earner did not fall on deaf ears when connected to the actions of workers during WWII as laborers across Nigeria were emboldened to demand proper treatment. The establishment of powerful unions and protests were a defining feature of Nigeria's post-war years.⁶⁰⁷

“On entering Government service, a clerk undertakes to serve anywhere in the country, including British Cameroon, and transfers are affected without any inconveniences or hardships.”⁶⁰⁸ The migration of civil servants offers new insights into the experiences of Igbo in Southern Cameroon because these public officials by the nature of their work held more power over the lives of Cameroonians than the plantation laborers. Although their position of power was

⁶⁰⁵“Manifesto of Nigerian Wage-Earners,” *West African Pilot*, August 16, 1941.

⁶⁰⁶“Manifesto of Nigerian Wage-Earners,” *West African Pilot*, August 16, 1941.

⁶⁰⁷ Manifesto of Nigerian Wage-Earners,” *West African Pilot*, August 16, 1941.

⁶⁰⁸“Migration of Civil Servants,” *West African Pilot*, July 19, 1941

minor, their voice represented that of the state, a nuanced interpretation that is significant because at the root of the “Igbo Scare” was a critique of civil servants as Igbo who only looked after one another.⁶⁰⁹ Igbo men’s access to wealth and commercial aptitude allowed them to capitalize on their new surroundings, a position that helped them obtain their positions as employees, traders, and laborers.⁶¹⁰ Southern Cameroon did not have an institution of secondary education until 1939 when the Roman Catholic Mill Hill Fathers opened St. Joseph’s College in Sasse, Victoria.⁶¹¹ This delay hindered Southern Cameroonians access to education and jobs.

In contrast, Southeastern Nigeria supported multiple secondary education institutions, and Igbos adapted quickly to education, with many continuing their studies at America and British universities.⁶¹² According to Amaazee, one result was that even Cameroonians who obtained an education in Nigeria found their path to public service blocked by Nigerians, primarily Igbo, who had entrenched themselves before the increase in qualified Cameroonians.⁶¹³ The stereotype that Cameroonians were denied government work by the corrupt demands of senior Igbo clerks became entrenched.⁶¹⁴ In 1948, the principal of St. Joseph’s compiled a list of graduates from 1946-1947 who found it difficult to find government employment in Southern Cameroon.⁶¹⁵ While all those listed did not find work in Cameroon, they did find work in other parts of Nigeria.⁶¹⁶ Working

⁶⁰⁹ Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁶¹⁰ Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁶¹¹ Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁶¹² Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁶¹³ Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁶¹⁴ Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁶¹⁵ Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁶¹⁶ Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

within the parameters of civil servant assignments, it was common for those seeking work near their communities to be stationed anywhere across the colony, creating the perception in the minds of educated Cameroonians that they were blocked by senior Igbo officials. Exploiting this misunderstanding, Cameroonian businessmen and politicians sought to consolidate power and social capital, placing blame for any isolated case of Igbo misbehavior, real or fictitious, on the Igbo collectively. For its part, the colonial government routinely did not address ethnic tensions, resulting in Cameroonian politicians to increasingly call for separation from Eastern Nigeria.⁶¹⁷

As colonial conversations emphasize, it was common knowledge that Igbo communities were “fanatical with regard to education.”⁶¹⁸ The Igbo ability to adapt to new environments and their willingness to operate independently contributed to their ability to campaign for colonial support. In Onitsha Province, 32% of all children attained some level of secondary education, and villages constantly pressured colonial officials and missions to establish secondary schools.⁶¹⁹

Moreover, villages were not averse to voluntarily providing funds to establish community secondary schools.⁶²⁰ Progressive unions and similar bodies became indispensable in paying for higher education abroad in England and the United States.⁶²¹ Igbo educational excellence contributed to the jobs many took during the war as many Igbo men avoided combat using their education to seek the more technical jobs.⁶²² The Igbo willingness to obtain an education had a

⁶¹⁷The term Igbo Scare is not the sole term used to describe the perceived abundance of Igbo men and women in Southern Cameroon. Anthony Ndi in *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons: Vital Lessons for Cameroon*, labeled the Igbo as Black Imperialists.

⁶¹⁸*Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48.

⁶¹⁹*Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48.

⁶²⁰ *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48.

⁶²¹ *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48.

⁶²²*Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48

direct correlation with their communities' ability to raise funds. Thus, the more Igbo men and women who earned degrees in higher education meant both their families and communities rose in status.⁶²³ Igbo communities used that money and status to build roads, schools, and infrastructure that advanced the younger generations.⁶²⁴ Just as the Eastern Province was population-dense, so too did it become educationally dense. This density of education led many to enter the private sector, but for those still in the public sector, it meant postings across Nigeria and Southern Cameroon.⁶²⁵ However, a significant number of these postings went to Igbos not because they were colonizers but simply because they were more educated.⁶²⁶

In 1941, Northern, Eastern, and Western Nigerian civil servant branches came under the single umbrella of the government civil service, which included the Audit, Prison, Police, Treasury, and Post and Telegraph Departments.⁶²⁷ Before the merger, each unit had a secretariat and operated independently.⁶²⁸ The merger streamlined transfers and management to aid in the more efficient running of the colony. The civil servant positions were held by Nigerians with advanced education though it forced many to live for extended periods outside of their natal communities.⁶²⁹ Through the *West African Pilot*, civil servants highlighted their interconnectedness through births, deaths, transfers, parties, and philanthropy. The experiences of laborers rarely made it into the *Pilot* as it was a space for educated men, women and renowned

⁶²³ Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices, 1947-48.

⁶²⁴ Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices, 1947-48.

⁶²⁵ Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices, 1947-48.

⁶²⁶ Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices, 1947-48.

⁶²⁷ "Migration of Civil Servants," *West African Pilot*, July 19, 1941

⁶²⁸ "Migration of Civil Servants," *West African Pilot*, July 19, 1941

⁶²⁹ "Migration of Civil Servants," *West African Pilot*, July 19, 1941

traders, showing the subtle distinction that was at the root of Igbo migration itself.⁶³⁰ In 1916, uneducated Igbo men migrated to Southern Cameroon because they were unable to find work in Nigeria. Making the journey on their own accord, they faced known and unknown dangers. Their experiences were ignored in the press as only those involved in illegal migration to Fernando Po were mentioned.⁶³¹ Those laborers reestablished the plantation system, and some used their accumulated wealth to become traders. Once Southern Cameroon was administered with Nigeria, educated Nigerian men and women arrived and benefited from the work of those early laborers.⁶³² Using Kumba, Buea, Victoria, and Tiko as a lens allows for a deeper understanding of the quotidian lives of civil servants across Southern Cameroon.

Kumba

Recreation was an essential component in the lives of civil servants, African staff, traders, and plantation laborers.⁶³³ The Kumba African Staff Recreation Club was established in 1929 not at the behest of colonial officials but through the persistence of the African staff.⁶³⁴ On 6 May 1929 the Kumba African Recreation Club wrote to Kumba D.O. G. G. Harris, applying for “an aid grant of thirty pounds to carry on work in hand.”⁶³⁵ The members of the “tennis branch” of the Kumba African Recreation Club had already purchased rackets and tennis balls, and contributions were already allocated to hire laborers to clear “a spot near the new District Offices for a suitable tennis court.”⁶³⁶ The club sought £30 in aid to complete the court and buy the equipment needed to maintain its proper running.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁰ “Migration of Civil Servants,” West African Pilot, July 19, 1941

⁶³¹ “Migration of Civil Servants,” West African Pilot, July 19, 1941

⁶³² “Migration of Civil Servants,” West African Pilot, July 19, 1941

⁶³³ African Recreation Club, Kumba, NAE, CSE 1.85.3226.

⁶³⁴ African Recreation Club, Kumba, NAE, CSE 1.85.3226.

⁶³⁵ African Recreation Club, Kumba, NAE, CSE 1.85.3226.

⁶³⁶ African Recreation Club, Kumba, NAE, CSE 1.85.3226.

⁶³⁷ African Recreation Club, Kumba, NAE, CSE 1.85.3226.

The Kumba African Staff Recreation Club boasted a complete list of members and elected officials, including a Game-Master.⁶³⁸ The purpose of this club was “to create social relationships between gentlemen and ladies interested in sports, games, and literature, thereby making for their improvement morally, physically, and intellectually.”⁶³⁹ All African residents in Kumba were eligible to be members if they applied and paid membership fees.⁶⁴⁰

On the evening of 23 May 1946 under District Scout Commissioner A. J. Udo Ema, the Boy Scout, Cubs of the Fourth Cameroons Group and the Girl Guides of the First Kumba Company celebrated Empire Day with a campfire.⁶⁴¹ The festivities on the next day involved the entire town in a series of parades and sporting events. At 8 am, school bands gathered in the town field where D.O. Harcourt delivered an Empire Day speech, which “was interpreted into Bafaw, Duala and Ibo respectively by Messrs. Mbongo, a pensioned ex-qualified interpreter, Njee, Government District Interpreter and Okoro, District Clerk.”⁶⁴² At 8:30 am, a march involving the Cubs, Girl Guides, Boy Scouts and E.T.C. students commenced. The Shield event concluded by 10:30, followed by sporting events. At 2:30, an obstacle race and a slow bicycle race, described as “the most amazing event,”⁶⁴³ were run. No such celebration could end without a football match, and the four thousand in attendance witnessed a heated match between E.T.C. XI and Kumba Town Picked XI, with E.T.C. winning the match 2 goals to 1.⁶⁴⁴ The Empire Day celebration provides insight into not only the diversity of Kumba but also the interaction among those diverse communities.

⁶³⁸ African Recreation Club, Kumba, NAE, CSE 1.85.3226.

⁶³⁹ African Recreation Club, Kumba, NAE, CSE 1.85.3226.

⁶⁴⁰ African Recreation Club, Kumba, NAE, CSE 1.85.3226.

⁶⁴¹ “Kumba,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 22 June 1946.

⁶⁴² “Kumba,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 22 June 1946.

⁶⁴³ “Kumba,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 22 June 1946.

⁶⁴⁴ “Kumba,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 22 June 1946.

Buea

Grand send-offs were commonplace in Buea not only for promotions, such as that held for Frank Achebe, but for transfers as well. Because civil servants had no control over transfers, these celebrations represented the last time these men and women could be together. On June 10, 1941, “a grand send-off was given to Mr. A. A. Oguntolu, Postmaster, Victoria, by the Victoria Yoruba Union to mark his departure on transfer to Buea.”⁶⁴⁵ Union members and friends were in attendance to wish him well in his new posting.⁶⁴⁶ Unions became essential features in the lives of strangers as they reproduced a semblance of home. Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba communities established unions that became pillars of the stranger community.

On December 17, 1943, Mr. A. O. Ilori of the Medical Department and his wife hosted a large party at their home to commemorate the first birthday of their child.⁶⁴⁷ E. K. Marti, a supervising teacher, was the MC for the event, which concluded at 6:30 pm: “The speakers at the function included Mr. Oguntolu, Postmaster, Mr. Agbebi, Social Secretary of the Green Triangle Club, and Mr. Obong of the Post and Telegraphs Department,” and refreshments along with music played by a harmonium and gramophone enhanced the festivities.⁶⁴⁸

Civil servant philanthropy was nationalistic and crossed ethnic lines through its objective to benefit the community at large.⁶⁴⁹ On 21 December 1943 “Messrs: Arrey Eben Williams, Okologu, Bordoh, Feh Agbebi, and two others,” established an evening school in Buea “open to all men who have the desire to improve their education.”⁶⁵⁰ They stated firmly that “the venture is no money-making business.”⁶⁵¹ Unencumbered by profit, the purpose of the school was to give

⁶⁴⁵“Victoria,” *West Africa Pilot*, June 10, 1941.

⁶⁴⁶ “Victoria,” *West Africa Pilot*, June 10, 1941.

⁶⁴⁷ “Buea,” *West African Pilot*, December 17, 1943.

⁶⁴⁸“Buea,” *West African Pilot*, December 17, 1943.

⁶⁴⁹ “Buea,” *West African Pilot*, December 17, 1943.

⁶⁵⁰“Buea,” *West African Pilot*, December 21 1943.

⁶⁵¹ “Buea,” *West African Pilot*, December 21, 1943.

back to the community by offering education to men who had lacked a formal education.⁶⁵² The evening school took on greater importance in the colonial context since any education under the previous generation would have been provided by German authorities directly or through the Basel Mission. While St. Joseph's College focused on those pursuing higher education, the evening school was intended to provide for the working class.⁶⁵³ In this instance, without malice or corruption, civil servants were giving back to their new community. Plans were in place to open the school on 1 January 1944.⁶⁵⁴

Information about the health of civil servants in the *Provincial News* section of the *Pilot* provides a lens for gaining insight into the quotidian communal nature of their lives. In April 1945, Mr. A. B. Ako a Lineman in the Posts and Telegraphs Department was admitted to the Tiko Likomba Hospital.⁶⁵⁵ What prompted his brief hospital stay is not clear; however, Mr. O. D. Ngembo, a Lineman in the Posts and Telegraphs Department in Buea, arrived for relief duty.⁶⁵⁶ The *Pilot* offered Ngembo extended praise for covering Ako's shift while he was in the hospital.⁶⁵⁷ Mental health was just as important as physical health as was detailed in September 1945 when Mr. E. E. Adams, a Senior Overseer of the Tole Plantation in Soppo, Buea, took a ten-week vacation in his homeland.⁶⁵⁸ In response, Mr. Oko Iboku along with his family arrived at the Tole Plantation to take Adam's place. The Tole plantation staff celebrated the Ibokus' family's arrival with a welcoming reception.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵² "Buea," *West African Pilot*, December 17, 1943.

⁶⁵³ "Buea," *West African Pilot*, December 17, 1943.

⁶⁵⁴ "Buea," *West African Pilot*, December 17, 1943.

⁶⁵⁵ Tiko, *West African Pilot*, April 14, 1945. "Mr. C. Okonkwo of the Public Relations Office, Lagos, who came here for cinema show, has left for Buea after a few days stay here"

⁶⁵⁶ Tiko, *West African Pilot*, April 14, 1945

⁶⁵⁷ Tiko, *West African Pilot*, April 14, 1945

⁶⁵⁸ Tiko, *West African Pilot*, April 14, 1945

⁶⁵⁹ "Provincial News, Buea," *West African Pilot*, September 27, 1945.

Notification of births, death, condolences, and congratulations were commonly reported in the printed lives of civil servants. Mr. Simon Eze, a renowned trader, was offered condolences following the death of his son in Mgbidi, Okigwe District.⁶⁶⁰ In contrast, on 22 October 1945, Mr. S. E. and Mrs. Agnes Agbo were offered congratulations on the successful delivery of their son, while Mr. S. I. Osummah, a clerk in the Police Department, was congratulated on his promotion to Sub-Inspector of Police.⁶⁶¹

Victoria

Transfers, leave, and vacation time formed the cycle of the life of civil servants and their families in Vitoria. As Mr. Sam Amobi of the Medical Department arrived in Victoria, Mr. Agbalaiya in Posts and Telegraphs was transferred to Lagos, and Mr. Ilorin of the Medical Department was transferred to Bamenda.⁶⁶² Mr. A. N. Okonji, PWD, took a two-month leave to visit Asaba, his hometown.⁶⁶³ Mr. E. E. Nyambi of the Victoria African Hospital, who was on leave in Calabar, returned to duty, and finally, Mr. M. A. Uwaifo of His Majesty's Customs was transferred to Fato, Cameroon.⁶⁶⁴ None of these men was in control of his destination, but upon reaching it, they undoubtedly did all they could to establish themselves and create a semblance of the home they had left behind.

In November 1941, Mr. J. E. N. Njotea opened his Victoria home to celebrate the birth of his newborn child. F. S. Ijeh chaired the event and oversaw musical entertainment by the Igbo and Cameroon orchestras. Those present included Messrs F. S. Ijeh, A. O. Eseauobi, D. N. Molokwu,

⁶⁶⁰Provincial News, Tiko, *West African Pilot*, October 10, 1945.

⁶⁶¹ Provincial News, Buea, *West African Pilot*, October 22, 1945.

⁶⁶² Provincial News, Buea, *West African Pilot*, October 22, 1945.

⁶⁶³“Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, November 11, 1941.

⁶⁶⁴“Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, October 18, 1941.

J. L. Oderinio, F. Okonji, Andrias, J. Nwoyimi, J. Onwuemene, H. P. I. Nwokobia, C. M. J. Johnson, J. M. Ajumobi, G. Mokoio, A. O. Makpo, W. A. Omeihe, and Jekeh Bepo.⁶⁶⁵

Mr. E. S. Shoyeye, “a well-known trader and contractor at the African Hospital” and Vice President of the Victoria Yoruba Tribal Union in Victoria, died on 9 December 1943.⁶⁶⁶ Shoyeye’s impact on the community was evident by the local response as people learned of his passing. At 4:00 pm, his residence at New Town “was besieged by over 500 mourners [and] the Yorubas and Bakweris danced according to their customs. At 4:15 pm, the corpse was placed into a PWD lorry and followed by a large crowd of Africans to the Basel Mission Church.”⁶⁶⁷ Shoyeye was subsequently buried in the New Town Cemetery, having lived the typical life of a stranger in Southern Cameroon.⁶⁶⁸ Despite their small population, those who arrived often diversified their endeavors, allowing them to engage a multitude of social and economic ventures in Southern Cameroon. It is not known when Shoyeye arrived in Southern Cameroon, but during his time there, he was able to rise within the Yoruba Union and become a renowned trader.⁶⁶⁹ His success culminated appropriately with 500 mourning his passing.⁶⁷⁰ It was common for men who became ill to return home as no one with means wished to die away from their motherland, suggesting that Shoyeye may have passed suddenly. Nevertheless, his death in Southern Cameroon shows the impact that strangers had in their home away from home.

Victoria boasted a diverse stranger community, with each ethnic community incorporating cultural aspects into its union. For example, in December 1943, Mrs. Asibi Adamu was elected “Queen Mother of one set of Hausa community residing” in Victoria.⁶⁷¹ The Hausa community

⁶⁶⁵ “Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, November 12, 1941.

⁶⁶⁶ Victoria, *West African Pilot*, December 9, 1943.

⁶⁶⁷ Victoria, *West African Pilot*, December 9, 1943.

⁶⁶⁸ Victoria, *West African Pilot*, December 9, 1943.

⁶⁶⁹ Victoria, *West African Pilot*, December 9, 1943.

⁶⁷⁰ Victoria, *West African Pilot*, December 9, 1943.

⁶⁷¹ Victoria, *West African Pilot*, December 23, 1943.

arrived in Southern Cameroon in two ways. First, the Hausa arrived as soldiers in the RAFF, informally establishing markets following WWI, and secondly, Hausa herders arrived from British Northern Cameroon and Northern Nigeria.⁶⁷²

As 1945 drew to a close, considerable changes occurred in the lives of the Southern Cameroon civil servant community. Mr. Nwosu of the Health Office received congratulations on two fronts. First, for the safe delivery of his child and the good health of his wife in the Victoria African Hospital. Second, Nwosu was elected the President of the Victoria Igbo Union, a position vacated by Mr. L. O. Mbakor of the Public Works Department after he was transferred to Enugu. Mr. A. B. Laguda occupied the open PWD position.⁶⁷³

Mbakor was a central figure in the Victoria Igbo community whose prominent presence was missed. Mbakor worked for the PWD as well as holding the offices of President of the Igbo Union and African Sports Club.⁶⁷⁴ On 11 December 1943, a “glorious event was held to commemorate the transfer to Enugu.”⁶⁷⁵ The African Sports Club organized both a tennis tournament and football matches. Following the matches, all those in attendance gave speeches praising Mbakor in the Club Hall.⁶⁷⁶ The Igbo Union represented by various districts began their portion “with the breaking of Kola,” followed by “various kinds of masquerade exhibitions.”⁶⁷⁷ A. N. Okonji of the PWD provided the farewell address on behalf of the Igbo Union.⁶⁷⁸ Highlighting

⁶⁷²An expanded understanding of the Hausa community in Southern Cameroon can be found in Harmony O’Rourke, *Hadija’s Story: Diaspora, Gender and Belonging in the Cameroon Grassfields*. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017)

⁶⁷³“Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, December 23, 1943.

⁶⁷⁴ “Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, December 11, 1943.

⁶⁷⁵“Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, December 11, 1943.

⁶⁷⁶ “Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, December 11, 1943.

⁶⁷⁷“Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, December 11, 1943

“Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, December 11, 1943.

the cycle of repetition in the lives of civil servants, only a month earlier the Asaba Union had given a “quiet but impressive send-off” for Mr. Okonji.⁶⁷⁹

The Green Triangle Club was another way civil servants expressed their philanthropy. Affiliated with the better known Lagos Green Triangle Club, its purpose was “(a) to give immediate relief to destitute persons, (b) to rid Victoria of potential juvenile social pests by repatriating them to their homelands and (c) to promote education by awarding scholarships to poor children who show promise in their schoolwork.”⁶⁸⁰ The Green Triangle Club focused on boys who fell between the cracks of both the Native Administration and the Education Department.

On 22 December 1943, the Victoria Green Triangle Club hosted its most significant event of the year, holding a concert and dance to raise funds for equipment and operations in the Native Court Hall, which was “taxed to its fullest capacity by both Africans and Europeans.”⁶⁸¹ Dr. H. G. Edmunds, the Medical Officer and President, was chair. The night's highlight was the performance of a play written by Mr. J. O. Ajayi, the Honorary Secretary, depicting the life of an orphan boy named Lifiyo:

[Lifiyo] lost his parents when young. This boy became associated with the boma boys' gang. One evening, as the members of the Investigation Board of the Green Triangle Club, were having their usual nocturnal rounds in quest of waifs and strays they entered the 'Hotel Magnificent' where in the company of other boma boys they found Lifiyo drinking and smoking. He was coaxed, however, and through the instrumentality of the board, he entered the Boys Hotel where he at once became an apprentice carpenter. After three years of real devotion to duty, he became a master carpenter and was employed by a big firm as head of the carpentry section. He later got married and became a man of family and lived a decent life throughout.⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁹“Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, November 12, 1941. Those present at the Asaba Union included Messrs: Mr. F.S. Ijeh, J.E.N. Njotea, A.O. Eseanobi, F. Okonji, G. Mokolo, J. Onwuemene, H.P.I. Nwokobia and Nwonyimi.

⁶⁸⁰Green Triangle Club, Victoria, NAE, CSE 1.85.9886.

⁶⁸¹“Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, December 22, 1943.

⁶⁸²Victoria, *West African Pilot*, December 22, 1943.

The play artistically presented the impact the Green Triangle Club wished to have on Southern Cameroonian life. The dance emceed by Mr. S. T. A. Toromiro and Miss M. D. Amoniba began at 10:00 pm, with the Bwinga Bombers Brass Band supplying music for the night.⁶⁸³ The waltz competition was the highlight of the dance. Mr. Edmunds presented the trophy to Mr. F. C. N. Odogwu and Miss C. Williams of the Victoria African Hospital, and the night's festivities concluded at 3:00 a.m.⁶⁸⁴

The Victoria Green Triangle Club included two organizations, the Social Club and the Green Triangle Hostel Working Committee.⁶⁸⁵ The Social Club hosted events such as the play and dance, which allowed them to focus primarily on fundraising. The resulting funds were used to promote the agenda of the Green Triangle Hostel Working Committee, which was responsible for establishing a hostel in Victoria for wayward youth.⁶⁸⁶ On 1 July 1944, the Green Triangle branches in Victoria, Tiko, and Buea came together to open “a destitute Boys Hostel in New Town.”⁶⁸⁷ During the opening of the hostel, which was a grand event, the Club boasted that no government help was solicited as all of the money used to establish the hostel came from fundraising and private donations.⁶⁸⁸ This financial freedom enabled the Green Triangle Club to operate independently and solely under the agenda decided by the Club.

⁶⁸³ Victoria, *West African Pilot*, December 22, 1943.

⁶⁸⁴ Victoria, *West African Pilot*, December 22, 1943. Mr. S.T.A. Toromiro, was Inspector of Police, Miss M.D. Amoniba, was the Assistant Secretary of the Green Triangle Club was hostess. Saheed Aderinto, *Children and Childhood in Colonial Nigeria Histories*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Abosede George, *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labor, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014)

⁶⁸⁵ Green Triangle Club, Victoria, NAE, CSE 1.85.9886.

⁶⁸⁶ Green Triangle Club, Victoria, NAE, CSE 1.85.9886.

⁶⁸⁷ *Green Triangle Club, Victoria*, NAE, CSE 1.85.9886.

⁶⁸⁸ Green Triangle Club, Victoria, NAE, CSE 1.85.9886.

Tiko

While the Igbo community reached across Southern Cameroon, its greatest coalescence was in Tiko.⁶⁸⁹ Situated on the coast, Tiko not only boasted plantation work but also easy access to the sea for those interested in the fishing trade as well as expedited access to trade goods arriving from Nigeria. On 12 April 1945, the Tiko Igbo community received news of the death of Mr. Emmanuel Elebeko, a local trader from Mgbidi, Okigwe District. Elebeko was “survived by two wives, two children, and an aged mother.”⁶⁹⁰ In the same week, Mrs. Ejiesie, the wife of Michael Ejiesie, a local trader, returned from her visit to Ihalla, Onitsha District⁶⁹¹. Onitsha, which had the largest market in Eastern Nigeria, was a central location from which Igbo traders purchased goods wholesale for the Southern Cameroonian market.⁶⁹²

In Tiko, the Igbo community established the Igbo Roman Catholic Mission Christian Union, and on 17 April 1945, the men held a social function at the home of Mr. Dennis Njoku, attended by Messrs. J. N. Anagor, F. E. Ikwuegbu, M. O. Ejiesie, D. Ejoku, W. O. Nwokedi, T. Obi, N. O. Nwaikpa, L. Ekeous, L. O. Nsonwu, A. Egbuwelw, J. Egbujor, R. Nwaogwu, and C. Adele.⁶⁹³ The establishment of the Igbo Roman Catholic Mission Christian Union indicates that unions could also be based on religious preference.

In September 1945, the Tiko Branch of the Igbo Union celebrated its inauguration and from all accounts functioned respectfully. The officers included

Messrs: Jack Uzo, President; Jonah Dike, Vice President; J. U. Onwukeme, Secretary; C. E. Anyanwu, Assistant Secretary; Ogudozie, Treasurer; M. O. Noble Ejiesie, Auditor and John Akpuluka, Messenger. The members of the executive committee included the officers together with Messrs: F. E. Ikwuegbu, A. Ohazulume, J. Anoraefeta, U. Onwukeme, P. Anosike, J. Adiele, J. Obegoro, P. Okorojih, O. Ubaozo, B. Okoro, E.

⁶⁸⁹ “Tiko,” *West African Pilot*, April 12, 1945.

⁶⁹⁰ “Tiko,” *West African Pilot*, April 12, 1945.

⁶⁹¹ “Tiko,” *West African Pilot*, April 12, 1945.

⁶⁹² “Tiko,” *West African Pilot*, April 12, 1945.

⁶⁹³ “Tiko” *West African Pilot*, April 17, 1945.

Nwaha, Ogbennia, L. Ihegwara, B. Abanaobi, I. Okorafor, S. Nwosu, R. Ejiofo, J. Anokwulu, D. Njoku, and Victor Chima.⁶⁹⁴

Tiko also boasted a Yoruba Union, and on 17 May 1945, it hosted the naming ceremony for Mr. Tijani Ogunlana's new baby. Those present included "Messrs: Oshifekun, Ajimobi, Akinola Fahm, and Shoneye. Mesdames: Maria Adeoti, Victoria Oshifekun, Nimota Fahm, Ojuolape Osholade, and Mama Sunday."⁶⁹⁵ In the same week, Mr. Salami Ogunlana, a famous Tiko trader and the Olori of the Yoruba Union, traveled to Ijebu Omu for a short visit.⁶⁹⁶ In the summer, the women of the Yoruba Union held elections, electing "Madam Maria Adeoti, the President; Victoria Oshifekun, Iyalode the Vice President; Madam Shadia Buraimoh, the Treasurer; and Mrs. Nimotalai Fahm, the Secretary."⁶⁹⁷

Just as in Victoria and Buea, life and death were reported through announcements in the *Pilot*. In September, Mr. Samson Ojioma, a trader, received sympathy from "friends and relatives on the death of his wife after childbirth."⁶⁹⁸ The following month Mr. Y. A. B. Ajimobi of His Majesty's Custom and Excise celebrated his birthday by hosting select friends at a luncheon in the government quarter.⁶⁹⁹ On his return from Mecca, Mr. Alhaji Hassan of Port Gentil passed through Tiko and was a noted guest of Mr. Y. A. B. Ajimobi.⁷⁰⁰ At the close of 1945, the Yoruba community was happy to welcome home their beloved chief, Mr. M. O. Ogebule, who had been away touring the French territories for his trading business.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁴ Provincial News, Tiko, *West African Pilot*, September 15, 1945.

⁶⁹⁵ Provincial News, Tiko, *West African Pilot*, September 15, 1945.

⁶⁹⁶ Provincial News, Tiko, *West African Pilot*, May 17, 1945.

⁶⁹⁷ Provincial News, Tiko, *West African Pilot*, June 23, 1945.

⁶⁹⁸ Provincial News, Tiko, *West African Pilot*, September 20, 1945.

⁶⁹⁹ Provincial News, Tiko, *West African Pilot*, September 20, 1945.

⁷⁰⁰ Provincial News, Tiko, *West African Pilot*, October 25, 1945.

⁷⁰¹ Provincial News, Tiko, *West African Pilot*, October 25, 1945.

The lives of civil servants were full of joy, sorrow, and growth. In lands that were not of their choosing, they were strangers of a different sort. However, because of their power, they were able to integrate themselves into the local community. Through such organizations as the Green Triangle Club, the Evening School, and the African Sports Club, civil servants built bridges and showed the level of respect they had for their new home. Through unions, civil servants not only effectively rebuilt a semblance of home, but they also created a foundation that would welcome strangers in the years to come. Civil servants did not live mundane lives, and apart from their quotidian experiences, they advocated for higher wages to meet the cost of living increases. In doing so, they participated in a wave of a labor protests that not only shaped Southern Cameroon but Nigeria as a whole.

Laborers Strike for Better Treatment and Increased Pay

On Tuesday, 21 August 1945, in response to the “abnormally low wages paid to them since the outbreak of the war,”⁷⁰² 14,000 artisans and laborers in Bota, Tiko, Ekona, Buea, and Kumba went on strike.⁷⁰³ They alleged “that the sums of 1/6d and nine pence had been the wages of artisans and laborers respectively from 1939 to the present day, in spite of the steep rise in the cost of living particularly with regard to imported European good and local foodstuffs.”⁷⁰⁴ This strike occurred in tandem with a myriad of strikes that shook Nigeria during the Second World War.

Negotiations between strike leaders and the Deputy Commissioner of Labour took place from August 14 to 18.⁷⁰⁵ Because of the potential for violence, Calabar and Port Harcourt police units were deployed. After the negotiations concluded, on Sunday, 26 August 1945, the 14,000

⁷⁰²14,000 Technicians in Cameroons on Strike,” *West African Pilot*, August 22, 1945.

⁷⁰³ 14,000 Technicians in Cameroons on Strike,” *West African Pilot*, August 22, 1945.

⁷⁰⁴14,000 Technicians in Cameroons on Strike,” *West African Pilot*, August 22, 1945.

⁷⁰⁵ 14,000 Technicians in Cameroons on Strike,” *West African Pilot*, August 22, 1945.

workers ended the strike. During the strike, six strikers from the Likomba Plantation were arrested.⁷⁰⁶

The *Pilot* reported that in “the scuffle between the strikers and the members of the police force in the town of Likomba, shots were fired by the latter wounding severely two of the workers.”⁷⁰⁷ In turn, several strikers wounded a police officer.⁷⁰⁸ The wounded were taken to the African Hospital. According to further reports, “during the strike, both European and African clerical employees had no work to do as the technicians were away on strike.”⁷⁰⁹ Subsequently, the Likomba refused to pay salaries to the African staff for the period of the strike.⁷¹⁰ On 14 October 1945, for “conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace and going about armed,” ten strikers were sentenced to 6 to 12 months in jail.⁷¹¹ The Cameroon Plantation Workers Union was not satisfied with the sentences and did all they could to seek clarification.

In August 1946, F. B. Carr, the Chief Commissioner Eastern Provinces, witnessed first-hand the rebuilding of the plantations during his inspection of the Cameroon Province.⁷¹² Most of this construction took place in Tiko, with the intention that it would be replicated in Victoria, Bamenda, Kumba, and Mamfe.⁷¹³ New homes were built from locally sourced brick and tile for the roofs with the intention that such use would generate a peripheral local industry. From the perspective of the colonial administration, the cost for each home was admittedly low from £30 to £35 and included the luxury of an attached kitchen.⁷¹⁴ Recreation was never far from the mind of plantation managers, and subsequently, homes were “placed around a large grassed open space,

⁷⁰⁶ “Strike of 14,000 I Cameroons Called Off,” *West African Pilot*, August 27, 1945.

⁷⁰⁷ “Cameroons Strikers and Police Stage Scuffle,” *West African Pilot*, September 5, 1945.

⁷⁰⁸ “Cameroons Strikers and Police Stage Scuffle,” *West African Pilot*, September 5, 1945.

⁷⁰⁹ “Cameroons Strikers and Police Stage Scuffle,” *West African Pilot*, September 5, 1945.

⁷¹⁰ “Cameroons Strikers and Police Stage Scuffle,” *West African Pilot*, September 5, 1945.

⁷¹¹ “Ten Armed Ex-Strikers Are Gaoled in Victoria,” *West African Pilot*, Oct. 15, 1945.

⁷¹² Housing of Plantation Labour, NAE, CSE 1.85.10,199.

⁷¹³ Housing of Plantation Labour, NAE, CSE 1.85.10,199.

⁷¹⁴ Housing of Plantation Labour, NAE, CSE 1.85.10,199.

which [would] hold a football ground.”⁷¹⁵ A bungalow that had fallen into disrepair became an employee club building.⁷¹⁶

However, an anonymous PWD member referenced the home construction in Tiko, saying “the buildings are cheap, but then the labor is cheap in the Cameroons—it used to be 4d to 5d a day for labourers—unless the Plantations are forced to pay like the Govt. Departments the minimum rate of 9d plus COLA.”⁷¹⁷ Such rhetoric permeated colonial government discussions and angered unions who fought for legitimate pay. Such logic pushed laborers to continue to strike in search of respect, a living wage, fair treatment, and protection.

Two significant strikes occurred between 1954 and 55 on the U.A.C. estates in Lobe and Ndian in the Kumba Division.⁷¹⁸ The Lobe Estate sent the following urgent telegram to Calabar: “estate canteen and stores have been looted. The heaviest damage occurred last Friday night. Estimated damage between ten and fifteen thousand pounds.”⁷¹⁹ The Lobe manager and several staff members barricaded themselves in houses during the height of disturbances.⁷²⁰ Heavy rainfall impeded any further demonstrations but also prevented a police unit from being dispatched. In good weather, the journey from Calabar would have taken ten hours.⁷²¹

Lobe laborers were “predominantly Ibibio with some Igbo and about twenty percent Cameroonians.”⁷²² Strikers demanded a “reduction in the task, increment one penny per day after three years, dismissal [of a] certain Cameroonian overseer.”⁷²³ On August 14th a 50-man police

⁷¹⁵*Housing of Plantation Labour*, NAE, CSE 1.85.10,199.

⁷¹⁶ *Housing of Plantation Labour*, NAE, CSE 1.85.10,199.

⁷¹⁷*Housing of Plantation Labour*, NAE, CSE 1.85.10,199.

⁷¹⁸ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate*, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935.

⁷¹⁹*Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate*, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935.

⁷²⁰ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate*, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935.

⁷²¹ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate*, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935.

⁷²²*Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate*, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935

⁷²³*Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate*, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935

unit accompanied the Labor Officer, and the Kumba Assistant left Victoria “proceeding by sea and river owing [to the] road passable only by land rover.”⁷²⁴

For their safety, women and children were evacuated to the nearby CDC plantation.⁷²⁵ All involved were aware of the potential increase in danger with the arrival of additional police units. On the evening of August 15, “a crowd of some 500 persons at Lobe who were armed with matchets and sticks gathered in front of the estate office.”⁷²⁶ The following day, Mr. Noble of the Labor Office finally arrived and brought the strike to an end.⁷²⁷

On 9 September 1955, approximately 1,000 U.A.C. workers at the Ndian Estate went on strike demanding their Gorsuch pay.⁷²⁸ In the mind of labor officials, it posed little threat of spreading pro-union sentiments because this estate was isolated from any significant town or political center.⁷²⁹ Geographically, this assumption was correct as the Ndian Estate lacked passable roads linked to commercial centers. Calabar, the nearest city, was eight hours away via a “quick boat.”⁷³⁰ However, the perceived isolation of the Ndian Estate did not impede the arrival of political ideas.

By 2 p.m. on September 24, a Limbe police unit successfully disembarked from Calabar and made its way to the Ndian Plantation the following day.⁷³¹ Although its arrival did not end the strike, it brought the threat of violence and looting to an end.⁷³² The police had the added effect of dividing the demands of the laborers, with some wishing to return to work and others requesting

⁷²⁴ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935*

⁷²⁵ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935*

⁷²⁶ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935*

⁷²⁷ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935*

⁷²⁸ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.*

⁷²⁹ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935*

⁷³⁰ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.*

⁷³¹ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.*

⁷³² *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935*

their remaining pay and leaving the estate.⁷³³ Noble remarked that he was under the impression “the strike [was] political and [asked] for a special branch service” at the earliest convenience to investigate.⁷³⁴

When Nobel arrived at the Ndian Estate, he heard 1,000 men demanding in unison: “We want our Gorsuch which the government has given you to pay us.”⁷³⁵ Some laborers were under the impression that Nobel had the money in his briefcase. This perception grew to such a fever pitch that a group of laborers “intimidated the Rio launch crew so that Mr. Nobel was stranded on the estate.”⁷³⁶ Strikers had grown tired of being misled and placated by the Ndian Estate staff.

By September 30, those workers wishing to leave handed in their tools, were paid and left the Ndian Estate.⁷³⁷ While meeting with Noble, the protesters arriving to speak to him continual changed, leading Mrs. Limb, who later investigated the political motives behind the strike, to posit that the protestors were disorganized.⁷³⁸ However, it can also speak to the level of organization they developed: in their demands, the strikers spoke in a single voice. Efforts were made to uncover the “influential person” who fueled the strike.⁷³⁹ Noble believed that this person could only be Mukanya, “the personal representative of Mr. Umbili, leader of the Kamerun Peoples Party.”⁷⁴⁰ Mukanya previously worked at the Ndian Estate, and with almost half of the laborers being from Southern Cameroon, the thought was that the KPP had made significant political inroads. Two months before the protest, Mukanya created trouble by speaking about the presence of “unmarried Cameroon women living on the estate.”⁷⁴¹ The KPP argued that Ndian Estate revenue should be

⁷³³ Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935

⁷³⁴ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons*, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.

⁷³⁵ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons*, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.

⁷³⁶ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons*, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.

⁷³⁷ Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935

⁷³⁸ Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Lobe Estate, Br. Cameroon, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1935

⁷³⁹ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons*, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.

⁷⁴⁰ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons*, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.

⁷⁴¹ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons*, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.

diverted to the Cameroon Regional Funds as opposed to going into other coffers. Mukanya was not the sole person at Ndian Estate known to spread “strike propaganda.” In addition, both Ndian Estate schoolteachers, J.I. Etukeni and L.E. Nailana, were known to be strike supporters.⁷⁴²

On 10 October 1955, J. O. Onyejekwe, the Senior Superintendent of the Calabar Police, wrote to the Commissioner of Police, Enugu, about the possibility of curtailing future Ndian Estate protests, saying “the Management of Pamol, Ltd should encourage the workers to organize themselves into a proper trade union, and so forestall the influence of uniformed leadership and strange politicians on them.”⁷⁴³ The latter speaks volumes about the political and social upheaval, which marked the 1950s. Political organizations did not miraculously appear out of thin air; they spoke to the people and galvanized them behind a nationalistic agenda. In the pursuit of political-economic power, some politicians slipped into xenophobic tropes, the impact of which grew more significant each year. However, none of the strikes was divided solely down ethnic lines. Working side by side in the field, strikers represented an egalitarian protest as they went on strike with a unified agenda in mind. Politics were not limited to urban centers but impacted the entire colony, touching the lives of everyone.

Managing Stranger Anxiety

In Enugu on the evening of Friday 9 April 1948, Sir. Bernard Carr, the C. M. G. Chief Commissioner of the Eastern Province, described the state of the province before the Select Committee on Estimates. Addressing the reason for the out-migration from the Eastern Provinces he bluntly remarked:

I think subconsciously at least they realize that they are fighting for their existence, knowing that their soil is deteriorating and that their population is increasing; and that urge

⁷⁴² *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons*, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.

⁷⁴³ *Strike of U.A.C. Workers in Ndian Estates, British Cameroons*, NAE, CALPROF 7.1.1936.

has sent them out to Sokoto, to Lagos, and to the Cameroons. You will find Ibos and other peoples of the Eastern Provinces everywhere.⁷⁴⁴

Sir Carr understood the tensions that had begun to surface with the arrival of strangers but made his position on the situation clear: “It is considered as a very grave menace to everybody else. But I think the fact remains that they will go out. They will turn their hands to everything.”⁷⁴⁵ The colonial government, whether purposeful or not, supported the out-migration of Igbos because of their education, commercial aptitude, and ability to adapt. Moreover, the colonial government welcomed them because it ultimately meant an increase in taxes and economic growth in the location they chose to settle. While the colonial government did not directly tell Igbo migrants where to settle, they were happy to see them choose the locations of economic importance.

The impact strangers had on Southern Cameroonian life was widely recognized in Southern Cameroon during the early days of British control and throughout the German era. Upwards of one-third of the plantation labor in the Victoria Division was comprised of strangers. In the Balong area, strangers outnumbered the community three to one, and the urban centers of Buea, Tiko, Victoria, and Kumba had the largest groups of strangers, with the bulk being traders.⁷⁴⁶ Even small areas such as Bakole had a significant stranger population, primarily comprised of fishers.⁷⁴⁷

Following the war, the stranger question took on heightened intensity because men and women felt less encumbered by the borders that previously deterred movement.⁷⁴⁸ Veterans demanded jobs and protection from the state in more significant numbers, and in response, the

⁷⁴⁴*Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48.

⁷⁴⁵*Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48.

⁷⁴⁶ *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48.

⁷⁴⁷ *Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons*, 1947.

⁷⁴⁸ *Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons*, 1947.

state moved men to locations that could accommodate them.⁷⁴⁹ In Southern Cameroon, the CDC, UAC, and John Holt Co. hired a large portion of these men.⁷⁵⁰ Consequently, the colonial government could no longer ignore the stranger's impact on communities. In seeking to address the situation, the colonial government empowered Native Authorities across Eastern Nigeria and Southern Cameroon to draft and pass laws regulating both the movement and settlement of strangers in their communities.⁷⁵¹ In 1945, these Native Authorities were empowered “(a) to give native strangers security of title; and (b) to enable a community to protect itself against large-scale alienation of the land on which its livelihood depends.”⁷⁵²

In 1947, the Southern Cameroons stranger population expanded, following the establishment of the CDC.⁷⁵³ These strangers were largely Nigerians and French Cameroonians who arrived facing two interrelated situations. Where land was abundant, strangers were welcomed.⁷⁵⁴ If strangers proved themselves to be good people, they would be allowed the use of uncleared land and provided a method for purchasing it.⁷⁵⁵ The stranger had to follow all stated native customs and laws, and registration was established by giving a gift to the head of the community.⁷⁵⁶ However, this gift did not correlate to the value of the land.⁷⁵⁷ In Victoria and Kumba Divisions, strangers entered an area where much of the land was devoted to plantations.⁷⁵⁸ Thus, the land not claimed by corporations took on heightened importance. The fear of providing

⁷⁴⁹ Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959.

⁷⁵⁰ *Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959.

⁷⁵¹ Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959.

⁷⁵² *Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959.

⁷⁵³ Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons, 1947.

⁷⁵⁴ Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons, 1947.

⁷⁵⁵ Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons, 1947.

⁷⁵⁶ Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons, 1947.

⁷⁵⁷ *Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons*, 1947.

⁷⁵⁸ Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons, 1947.

land to strangers in these two Divisions was linked to the propensity strangers had for planting money crops such as cocoa as doing so signified not only that the stranger valued the land but also that he was establishing roots.⁷⁵⁹

Colonial officials were vocal in their negative view of Southern Cameroonians. Mr. F. E. V. Smith, the CDC Chairman, provided the following statement when asked about CDC operations: “we sell bananas to the Ministry of Food; we sell our rubber on the open market; and we sell our palm products to the West African Produce Control Board and we rank as exporters for that purpose.”⁷⁶⁰ However, when questioned about his views of Southern Cameroonians, he bluntly remarked: “the Africans know very little about it. I am afraid, because the Cameroons people, on the whole, are not highly intelligent, and they are not growing for themselves.”⁷⁶¹ In contrast, the perception of Igbo migrants was one of commercial astuteness.⁷⁶² These two opposing perceptions were no secret and crept into the local lexicon of the day, fueling rivalries.

The indigenous fear of strangers was intimately rooted in economic anxiety. Across Southern Cameroon, there was a reluctance to allow strangers to plant money crops, such as cocoa, because by doing so they were in effect creating small plantations.⁷⁶³ Additionally, in claiming the trees as property, strangers made retrieval of land from its original indigenous owner difficult.⁷⁶⁴ In this case, the stranger could force the indigenous owner to pay for the value of the trees if they wanted the land back.⁷⁶⁵ It was commonplace for a stranger to sell the land to another stranger,

⁷⁵⁹ *Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons*, 1947.

⁷⁶⁰ *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48.

⁷⁶¹ *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48.

⁷⁶² *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*, 1947-48.

⁷⁶³ *Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons*, 1947.

⁷⁶⁴ *Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons*, 1947.

⁷⁶⁵ *Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons*, 1947.

which further complicating original ownership.⁷⁶⁶ In such cases, the second or third stranger who bought a portion of land could assert he was the rightful owner, presenting documentation of sale and ownership of both the land and money crops.⁷⁶⁷

Colonial action related to the power of strangers and the power of Native Authorities to control the actions of strangers was largely mishandled. In February 1946, H. F. Marshall, the Chief Secretary to the Government, confidentially told the Commissioner of Lands, Lagos, that law officers advised the control of strangers could “be more readily achieved by making rules under the recent amendment to the Native Authority Ordinance.”⁷⁶⁸ In August 1946, Dr. F. B. Carr, the Chief Commissioner of the Eastern Provinces, inspected the Cameroons Province while in Victoria, indicating that “control of land use by strangers” was high on his agenda.⁷⁶⁹ In line with the government’s views, Carr reminded all those present that “the Native Authority could make rules under the Native Authority Ordinance.”⁷⁷⁰

Carr felt legislation addressing this situation could generate intense opposition if the government was not prepared to deal with it. However, the danger of doing nothing to ease the tensions generated by strangers outweighed the fear of political opposition. Carr proposed legislation controlling the movement of strangers in three areas, each with the intended purpose of returning power to Native Authorities across the Eastern Provinces:

(a) to control the alienation of land to strangers; (b) to control the use for specific purpose not only of communal land but also of all land within their jurisdiction; and (c) the control

⁷⁶⁶ Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons, 1947.

⁷⁶⁷ *Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons*, 1947.

⁷⁶⁸ *Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land by Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959

⁷⁶⁹ *Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Owerri Province Regulating the Occupation of Land by Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7962. Section 25 of the Native Authority Ordinance was in line with the recommendations which proceeded its formulization.

⁷⁷⁰ *Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land by Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959; *Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Owerri Province Regulating the Occupation of Land by Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7962. Section 25 of the Native Authority Ordinance was in line with the recommendations which proceeded its formulization.

of certain transactions in land, such as the sale of land, particularly farmland; subject in each case to the overriding approval of the Resident.⁷⁷¹

This ordinance, once officially passed, gave communities sweeping power over the cultivation of land as well as a formalized system for recording and filing documents related to the selling and leasing land.⁷⁷²

The Native Authority Ordinance allowed communities to exert a tremendous amount of power over stranger populations.⁷⁷³ However, during its first iteration, it lacked a definitive description of who was and who was not a stranger. During its July meeting, the Eastern Provinces Regional Conference noted: “a single Native Authority has jurisdiction over a whole division [of] members of one clan [who] may be regarded as strangers by those of some of the other clans in the same division.”⁷⁷⁴

In December 1947, between Tuesday and Wednesday of the 16th and 17th, the Eastern Provinces Regional Conference took place.⁷⁷⁵ Item VII of the agenda, titled “Legislation for Control of the Use of Land by Strangers,” highlighted the continued efforts of the government to control the movement of strangers.⁷⁷⁶ Continuing to be unable to resolve the stranger question, the government fed into the belief that strangers, in the case of the Igbo in Southern Cameroon, were intent on seizing control of all they encountered. In failing to address the matter, the government

⁷⁷¹*Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959.

⁷⁷²*Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959.

⁷⁷³ *Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Owerri Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7962.

⁷⁷⁴*Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Owerri Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7962.

⁷⁷⁵ *Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Owerri Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7962.

⁷⁷⁶*Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959.

contributed to the political and economic agendas of the Cameroonians, who used stereotypes to create fear and increase their power. At the end of the conference, the following was agreed:

- (1) That survey by a licensed surveyor was out of the question as a method to be required, except perhaps in urban areas, but if parties desired to employ a licensed surveyor there could be no objection.
- (2) That a combination of pillars, which might be of the ordinary type or of the special type desired in the paper, hedges and a description ties to a fixed point offered the best normal method of defining land.
- (3) That the present scale of stamp fees was not excessive.
- (4) That registration fees should be fixed in each set of rules but should aim at making the registration service self-supporting.
- (5) That in each set of rules a suitable definition of “stranger” should be included.
- (6) That generally speaking thou registration might be made compulsory in the case of strangers; it must always be permissive in other cases. Native Authorities should not make rules making registration of anything except transactions with strangers’ compulsory,
- (7) That specimen rules should be prepared and circulated for guidance.⁷⁷⁷

Decisions made during the Eastern Provinces Regional Conference shaped the tone of the interaction between Native Authorities and strangers for the coming decade. The colonial government did not wish to pay for a surveyor to accurately determine how many strangers lived in Southern Cameroon.⁷⁷⁸ They placed this burden on the community officials who, at this point, were more concerned with building roads.⁷⁷⁹ Greater still was the lack of an understanding of who was and was not a stranger. The latter played a vital role in the growth of anti-Igbo sentiments. Anthony Ndi went so far as calling Igbos “Black Imperialists.”⁷⁸⁰ Comparatively, French Cameroonians and grassfielders were not seen as strangers even though, by definition, they were.⁷⁸¹ Through political rhetoric, they transitioned into a nexus of Pan-Cameroonian identity.

⁷⁷⁷*Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959.

⁷⁷⁸ *Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Owerri Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7962.

⁷⁷⁹*Rules and Orders Made by Native Authorities, Cameroons Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7959.

⁷⁸⁰ Ndi, *Golden Age*

⁷⁸¹ *Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Owerri Province Regulating the Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7962.

Land and commercial competition were heated topics of contention between stranger communities and the Cameroonians. Furthermore, the fear that strangers contributed to the moral laxity of Cameroonian women contributed to fears around money and masculinity. In Victoria, the Bakweri became convinced that Igbo men, who had large amounts of expendable cash, threatened the morality of Bakweri women.⁷⁸² Igbos were blamed for increased divorce rates, increases in crime, unlawful partnerships, the spread of venereal disease, and the decline in birth rates.⁷⁸³ These and any other negative perceptions were seen as caused by strangers, specifically the Igbo primarily because they were the most recognizable. Separate from questions of prostitution, another fear in traditional circles was that marriage to a stranger would result in the loss of a daughter once the stranger chose to leave Southern Cameroon.⁷⁸⁴ Later cases will show that this sentiment was, at times, not only misplaced but inverted.

In 1951, the Wimbu Native Authority in the Bamenda Division used the Native Authority Ordinance to propose the alienation of land rules.⁷⁸⁵ To become law, the proposal required the approval of the Secretary of the Eastern Province.⁷⁸⁶ The Wimbu Alienation of Land Rules defined a native as “any person who is eligible by native law and custom to inherit land or the use of land within the area.”⁷⁸⁷ Thus, a stranger was any person who could not inherit land through traditional means.⁷⁸⁸ In December, the Wimbu Alienation of Land Rules was rejected because such rules

⁷⁸²Joseph Takougang, *Victoria: An Africa Township Under British Administration, 1916-1961*, thesis, (University of Illinois, Chicago, 1985), 199.

⁷⁸³ Edwin Ardener, *Divorce and Fertility: An African Study*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962),

⁷⁸⁴ Ardener, *Divorce and Fertility*

⁷⁸⁵ Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Bamenda Province, Regulating The Occupation of Land By Strangers, NAE, CSE 1.85.7963.

⁷⁸⁶ Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Bamenda Province, Regulating The Occupation of Land By Strangers, NAE, CSE 1.85.7963.

⁷⁸⁷ Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Bamenda Province, Regulating The Occupation of Land By Strangers, NAE, CSE 1.85.7963.

⁷⁸⁸ Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Bamenda Province, Regulating The Occupation of Land By Strangers, NAE, CSE 1.85.7963.

“were never intended to apply to land controlled under the provisions of the Land and Native Rights Ordinance.”⁷⁸⁹ Such actions by the colonial government only aggravated local tensions. Even when Cameroonian Native Authorities followed the governmental rules, they were rejected on the pretense that they were a mandate or that they were not in full compliance with them. Thus, while the government purported to empower communities, it slowly reduced their power, and these communities were not able to retaliate, resulting in internal frustrations in the stranger communities who were the reason for these ordinances.

Stranger Anxiety and the 1953 Eastern House Crisis

In a tone as moving as his works were pathetic, the Member for Cameroons Divisions, the Hon. J. Manga Williams advocated for the improvement of the tenure system in the Cameroons under British Mandate. He was speaking during the debate on the Appropriations Bill yesterday morning after the Hon. J. F. Winter. Incidentally, the Hon. Manga Williams’ speech ended the debate on this bill from the unofficial bench. After thanking the Resident of the Cameroon for re-nomination, and His Excellency for his last visit to the Cameroons, the honorable member expressed his deep regret at the recent death of the Resident of the Cameroons. On the subject of transportation between Calabar and Victoria, the Hon. Manga Williams agitated for the improvement of the existing facilities. Elaborating on the question of land tenure in his constituency, the honorable member gave the history of his aspect of life in the Cameroons [from] 1840 to the days of the Germans and to 1914 when the British took over from the Germans. The Germans went on by means of systematic policy of force, grabbed the lands of the people and, gradually drove the indigenous sons of the soil down to the coast where they had been ever since. He hoped, therefore, that the development schemes efforts would make for the people to have more lands for cultivation beyond the confines of their present accommodation. With regards to the proposed development plan, and in view of the political and constitutional reforms envisaged for the country as a whole, the Hon. Manga Williams expressed the hope that efforts would be made when the time came, to give the primitive people a chance to voice out their sentiments.⁷⁹⁰

“We want more and more technical and agricultural training in our schools,” Williams remarked on the floor of the Eastern House of Assembly.⁷⁹¹ In the *Pilot* public opinion piece,

⁷⁸⁹*Rules and Orders Made by the Native Authorities Bamenda Province, Regulating The Occupation of Land By Strangers*, NAE, CSE 1.85.7963.

⁷⁹⁰ “Tenure in Cameroons is Severely Attacked,” *West African Pilot*, March 10, 1945.

⁷⁹¹ Sojourner, “What Cameroons Really Needs,” *West African Pilot*, March 19, 1945.

“What Cameroon Really Needs,” Sojourner responded, saying “if that is all that can be said about education, I feel, as one who has spent a considerable time there, that it is definitely not enough.”⁷⁹²

Sojourner recommended secondary schools, the extension of money earmarked for scholarships for Cameroonian students, and paid staff for the night school recently opened in Victoria. Sojourner concluded, stating, “I would like to say that these are serious points which have been got as a result of my contact with progressive youths of Cameroon both in Lagos and at home.”⁷⁹³

The position of the *Pilot* was influenced by Cameroonians abroad, who were outside of Williams’ sphere. In places such as Lagos, educated Cameroonians created political and social positions for themselves largely through the Cameroons Youth League (CYL) and the Cameroons Welfare Union (CWU).⁷⁹⁴ In giving them a voice, the *Pilot* ostracized Williams and angered his supporters.

The *Pilot*’s critical view of Williams, the Southern Cameroon elder statesman since the German era, deepened the growing rift between Nigeria and Southern Cameroon and was used throughout the decade as a political wedge.⁷⁹⁵ Nnamdi Azikiwe, through *Ziks Press* and his stewardship of the NCNC, shaped politics and intellectualism across Southern Cameroon and Eastern Nigeria.⁷⁹⁶ Southern Cameroon had no formal press until Azikiwe founded the *Eastern Outlook and Cameroon’s Star*, which devoted a large amount of its coverage to Southern Cameroonian life.⁷⁹⁷ Williams was the only African appointed to the CDC board. In 1948, Mr. F. E. V. Smith, the CDC Chairman, admitted that Williams was chosen primarily because of Southern

⁷⁹²Sojourner, “What Cameroons Really Needs,” *West African Pilot*, March 19, 1945.

⁷⁹³Sojourner, “What Cameroons Really Needs,” *West African Pilot*, March 19, 1945.

⁷⁹⁴Richard A. Goodridge, “Activities of political Organisations: Southern Cameroons. 1945-61,” in *Cameroon: From a Federal to a Unitary State, 1961-1972*, eds. Victor Julius Ngoh, (Limbe: Design House, 2004), 18.

⁷⁹⁵Joseph Takougang, “Chief Johannes Manga Williams and the Making of a ‘Native’ Colonial Autocrat Among the Bakweri of the Southern Cameroons,” *TransAfrican Journal of History*, (Jan. 1:1994).

⁷⁹⁶ Joseph Takougang, “Chief Johannes Manga Williams and the Making of a ‘Native’ Colonial Autocrat Among the Bakweri of the Southern Cameroons,” *TransAfrican Journal of History*, (Jan. 1:1994).

⁷⁹⁷ Joseph Takougang, “Chief Johannes Manga Williams and the Making of a ‘Native’ Colonial Autocrat Among the Bakweri of the Southern Cameroons,” *TransAfrican Journal of History*, (Jan. 1:1994).

Cameroon's educational underdevelopment.⁷⁹⁸ Williams's appointment provided him with political clout, which extended his reach beyond Victoria. Since the disparaging comments were in the *Pilot*, they were viewed as a direct attack on Williams by Azikiwe. Such perceptions did not endear Southern Cameroonians politically to Azikiwe and the NCNC.

In response to the Igbo population growth in Victoria and the political criticism of Williams, the Bakweri attempted to block Igbo from participating in the fishing trade.⁷⁹⁹ On February 7, 1948, the Cameroon Union asked the fishing headmen in Mboko, Kongo, Mbome, and Iseme to stop selling fish to Igbo fishers.⁸⁰⁰ The Cameroon Union wanted all Igbo canoes prevented from passing through ports, along with obstructing Igbo movement in general.⁸⁰¹ Those opposed to the Cameroon Union's recommendation were threatened with a £5 fine.⁸⁰² Williams challenged the Igbos in Tiko, where tensions were high over farmland, fishing, trade, and women. To ease situation, the residents of Tiko demanded that the Igbo meet with Williams and obtain a signed letter from him stipulating that he supported an end to these tensions.⁸⁰³ In Tiko, Williams's actions were supported by the Bamenda grassfielders and the French Cameroonians, who themselves were strangers in Tiko, though they were able to cloak themselves in the cloth of Pan-Cameroonian ideology.⁸⁰⁴ The colonial government felt that early forms of anti-Igbo sentiment were organized and encouraged by both Williams and Dr. E. M. L. Endeley, the two leading political figures in

⁷⁹⁸1947-48, *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*

⁷⁹⁹ Victor Bong Amaazee, "The 'Igbo Scare' in British Cameroon, 1945-61," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁸⁰⁰ Victor Bong Amaazee, "The 'Igbo Scare' in British Cameroon, 1945-61," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁸⁰¹ Victor Bong Amaazee, "The 'Igbo Scare' in British Cameroon, 1945-61," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁸⁰²Victor Bong Amaazee, "The 'Igbo Scare' in British Cameroon, 1945-61," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁸⁰³ Victor Bong Amaazee, "The 'Igbo Scare' in British Cameroon, 1945-61," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁸⁰⁴Victor Bong Amaazee, "The 'Igbo Scare' in British Cameroon, 1945-61," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

Southern Cameroon.⁸⁰⁵ Amaazee notes that in Victoria, the cause of anti-Igbo sentiment was *Ziks Press*' criticism of Williams while he was a member of the Eastern House of Assembly.⁸⁰⁶ The Eastern House of Assembly became the stage on which political and personal grievances were aired, with the most pronounced being the 1953 Eastern House crisis.

The 1953 Eastern House Nigerian crisis was spurred by the creation of regional governments in the Macpherson Constitution, which consequently fueled ethnic rivalries. The Macpherson Constitution aimed to slow Nigerian independence by giving Nigerian leaders more power.⁸⁰⁷ To achieve this goal, an unofficial Nigerian majority was created in the House of Representatives. Additionally, a council of ministers with limited powers was formed as well as three regional governments.⁸⁰⁸

The Macpherson Constitution propelled agitation for independence and cemented regional and ethnic tensions. Southern Cameroonian politicians believed that as a minority in the Eastern House of Assembly, they would continue to be marginalized and controlled from abroad.⁸⁰⁹ The Macpherson Constitution, through its reliance on regionalism, normalized the use of ethnic stereotypes for political gain because Nigeria was now governed through a three-regional system based on the colony's three dominant ethnic groups, the Hausa in the North, the Yoruba in the South-West, and the Igbo in the East.

⁸⁰⁵ Victor Bong Amaazee, "The 'Igbo Scare' in British Cameroon, 1945-61," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁸⁰⁶ Victor Bong Amaazee, "The 'Igbo Scare' in British Cameroon, 1945-61," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁸⁰⁷ Martin Lynn, "The Nigerian Self-Government Crisis of 1953 and the Colonial Office," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 34, No.2 (June 2006): 245-261.

⁸⁰⁸ 1947-48, *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates Together with The Minutes of Evidence Taken Before Sub-Committee B and Appendices*.

⁸⁰⁹ Martin Lynn, "The Nigerian Self-Government Crisis of 1953 and the Colonial Office," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 34, No.2 (June 2006): 245-261.

The NCNC was the first nationwide political party in colonial Nigeria to promote a nationalistic form of politics that crossed ethnic lines.⁸¹⁰ In 1946, Herbert Macaulay, the first leader of the NCNC, died, and power was transferred to Nnamdi Azikiwe, the then secretary-general.⁸¹¹ Azikiwe had played a significant role in Lagos politics in the prior decade, and through *Zik Press*, he was a well-known national figure. In Lagos, many Yoruba NCNC believed politics and power were consolidated in Igbo hands.⁸¹²

The first effect of the fear of Igbo political domination was not in Nigeria but London.⁸¹³ Since the 1920s London had been a city where West Indians and West Africans were united around political and social causes through both the League of Coloured Peoples and the West African Student Union organizations.⁸¹⁴ They were also critically fertile social and intellectual spaces. In 1948, a group of Yoruba in London established the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, a cultural organization, the same year in which a Nigerian press war developed between the Igbo and Yoruba controlled presses.⁸¹⁵

In South-West Nigeria, this war of the presses culminated in 1950 through the founding of the Action Group (AG), a Yoruba-dominated party aimed at stopping the spread of the NCNC.⁸¹⁶ Because the Macpherson Constitution established a regional structure, the AG could use its

⁸¹⁰Martin Lynn, "The Nigerian Self-Government Crisis of 1953 and the Colonial Office," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 34, No.2 (June 2006): 245-261.

Patrick Furlong, "Azikiwe and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons," *African Affairs*, Vol. 91, Issue 364 (1992): 433.

⁸¹² Patrick Furlong, "Azikiwe and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons," *African Affairs*, Vol. 91, Issue 364 (1992): 433.

⁸¹³ Daniel Whittall, "Creating Black Places in Imperial London: The League of Coloured Peoples and Aggrey House, 1931-1943," *The London Journal*, Vol. 36, Issue 3 (November 2011):225-246.

⁸¹⁴Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship, and The Politics of Race*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Daniel Whittall, "Creating Black Places in Imperial London: The League of Coloured Peoples and Aggrey House, 1931-1943," *The London Journal*, Vol. 36, Issue 3 (November 2011):225-246.

⁸¹⁵ Daniel Whittall, "Creating Black Places in Imperial London: The League of Coloured Peoples and Aggrey House, 1931-1943," *The London Journal*, Vol. 36, Issue 3 (November 2011):225-246.

⁸¹⁶John A.A. Ayoade, "Party and Ideology in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Action Group," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 16, Issue 2 (1985) 169-188.

Yoruba majority to dominate politics in the South-West.⁸¹⁷ The importance of ethnic unity and ethnic baiting was not lost on northern Nigerian politicians. In 1949, Ahmadu Bello founded the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) with power vested in the hands of Islamic elites and Native Authorities.⁸¹⁸ The NPC and its members were suspicious of the possibility of Igbo control if the British granted Nigerian independence.⁸¹⁹

By 1953, both national and regional politics were ethnically fragmented. National politics in Northern, South-Western, and Eastern Nigeria were dominated by the colonies' three largest ethnic groups. In 1951, the AG outmaneuvered Azikiwe's plans to enter the Lagos House of Representatives.⁸²⁰ Azikiwe resigned his seat and returned east, where he asserted the full weight of his NCNC power by pushing other Eastern House members to resign. However, six Efik ministers withdrew their resignations, sending the Eastern House into crisis.⁸²¹ The ensuing crisis created space for Southern Cameroonian politicians to advance the agenda of their regional autonomy.⁸²²

By order of the Lt. Governor, the Eastern House of Assembly was dissolved on 7 May 1953.⁸²³ The only decision house members were able to agree upon was that they must present a united front if independence was announced in 1956.⁸²⁴ From the Eastern House public gallery,

⁸¹⁷ John A.A. Ayoade, "Party and Ideology in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Action Group," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 16, Issue 2 (1985) 169-188.

⁸¹⁸ John A.A. Ayoade, "Party and Ideology in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Action Group," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 16, Issue 2 (1985) 169-188.

⁸¹⁹ Martin Lynn, "The Nigerian Self-Government Crisis of 1953 and the Colonial Office," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 34, No.2 (June 2006): 245-261; Justin O. Labinjoh, "The National Party of Nigeria: A Study in the Social Origins of a Ruling Organization," *African Spectrum*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1981): 193-201.

⁸²⁰ Martin Lynn, "The Nigerian Self-Government Crisis of 1953 and the Colonial Office," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 34, No.2 (June 2006): 245-261.

⁸²¹ Martin Lynn, "The Nigerian Self-Government Crisis of 1953 and the Colonial Office," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 34, No.2 (June 2006): 245-261.

⁸²² Martin Lynn, "The Nigerian Self-Government Crisis of 1953 and the Colonial Office," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 34, No.2 (June 2006): 245-261.

⁸²³ "Eastern House Dissolved," *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

⁸²⁴ "Eastern House Dissolved," *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

Mr. Michael Udezuka, a trader from Onitsha, was heard shouting, “Zik must reign.”⁸²⁵ Attempting to bring the chaos to an end, the President ordered the public gallery cleared. It was at that moment that Dr. Azikiwe, accompanied by many prominent members of the NCNC, stood up and left the gallery.⁸²⁶ Mr. Udezuka, who described himself as politically independent, remarked upon their leaving that, “Zik is my father, he will rule us.”⁸²⁷ Such was the state of politics in Eastern Nigeria at the genesis of the Eastern House crisis.

The dissolution of the Eastern House of Assembly meant new elections needed to be called, a situation which would pit the East’s two largest political parties, NCNC and NIP, against each other.⁸²⁸ On the political periphery were the non-affiliated Cameroonian assemblymen. Dr. Endeley sat in the same public gallery, and as he saw Azikiwe grow in power, he felt his own power and region come further under the gaze of the East and that much closer to Igbo domination. Such sentiments were common even when veiled under the cloth of regional autonomy.⁸²⁹ Eight Cameroonian assemblymen made it clear that they would not participate in the election but would instead take their grievance to the United Nations Trusteeship Council.⁸³⁰ They advocated for neutrality in the face of the Eastern crisis; however, underneath this compromise was the desire for regional independence.⁸³¹ Cameroonian Assemblymen were angered that members of the Eastern House rejected the reinstatement of Mr. S. T. Muna, the Minister of Works, who was from Southern Cameroon.⁸³²

⁸²⁵“Eastern House Dissolved,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

⁸²⁶ “Eastern House Dissolved,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

⁸²⁷“Eastern House Dissolved,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

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⁸²⁹“Eastern House Dissolved,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

⁸³⁰ “Eastern House Dissolved,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

⁸³¹“Eastern House Dissolved,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

⁸³² “Eastern House Dissolved,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

Dr. Endeley from Victoria, Mr. J. T. Ndze and A. T. Ngala from Nkambe, Rev. J. C. Kangsen from Wum, Mr. S. T. Muna and J. N. Foncha from Bamenda, and Mr. M. N. Foju and S. A. George from Mamfe released the following statement explaining their neutral position as well as their vision for Southern Cameroon:

We, your elected representatives consider this act to be a deliberate disregard for the wishes of the Cameroon people. We have therefore broken our connection with the Eastern Region because we believe that as a minority group in the Eastern Regional Legislature we are unable to make the wishes of the Cameroon people respected. We consider that our immediate duty now is to press our demand for a separate region and to this end, we call upon all Cameroonians to be prepared to make sacrifices.

We strongly advise all Cameroonians to boycott any future elections to the Eastern House of Assembly. We, your representatives have decided to boycott the next election to the Eastern House and to remain at home until we are granted a Cameroons House of Assembly.

We appeal to you all to stand firm, to be loyal to the cause of our dear country and to have faith in the future of the Cameroons.

In order to review our position and to evolve the details of our positive plans all Native Authorities, Tribal Organizations, Chiefs, and people of every village and town have been invited to send two representatives to an All Cameroons Conference to be held in Mamfe on 22 to 24 May 1953.⁸³³

Political support for neutrality and the All Cameroons Conference was not united. Southern Cameroonian NCNC members were against such action, with the foremost being Mr. Mbile, who stated, “the Cameroons can move faster by continuing to be friends with Nigeria politically.”⁸³⁴ The split between the Cameroonian delegation and Cameroonian NCNC bloc exposed a simmering discontent between Cameroonians in Southern Cameroon and those abroad.⁸³⁵ The Bafaw Improvement Union chastised Lagos Southern Cameroonians for supporting the NCNC bloc, issuing this rebuttal: “Any Assemblyman who is opposed to it is there in Nigeria to seek his own

⁸³³ “Concerning the Cameroons,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

⁸³⁴ “From Bafaw to Lagos,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

⁸³⁵ “From Bafaw to Lagos,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

ends.”⁸³⁶ Sentiment grew that those not living in Cameroon could not fully speak on the trajectory of politics in Southern Cameroon. A similar complaint was made in response to criticism from Lagos-based Cameroonians towards Manga Williams in 1945.⁸³⁷

The Cameroon National Federation and Kamerun United National Congress merged, creating the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) headed by Dr. Endeley.⁸³⁸ A month after the Cameroonian bloc’s declaration to abstain from Eastern House elections, the Central Executive of the KNC, afraid losing vacated seats, revoked the decision of Dr. Endeley and the Cameroon bloc not to run for office.⁸³⁹ The KNC assured the nine assemblymen who had remained loyal to the cause that they would have the organization’s full political support. The same could not be said for Mbile and the other four NCNC members. Mbile was relieved of his position as KNC Secretary-General.⁸⁴⁰

A disparate delegation of five representing Southern Cameroon attended the 1953 London Constitutional Conference.⁸⁴¹ Dr. Endeley, representing the Cameroon delegation, was accompanied by his two advisors, Mr. George, and Rev. J. C. Kangsen. Mr. Abba Habib represented the NPC, and Mbile represented the NCNC delegation. They were truly a house divided.⁸⁴²

Dr. Endeley delivered the first of his pointed critiques of the Macpherson Constitution on 31, July 1953 at the Lancaster House:

The Macpherson Constitution makes no safeguards for preserving the identity of the Cameroons as a Trust Territory; while it tends to recognize the right of the territory to separate representation in the Nigerian Council of Ministers; that right is viciated by the

⁸³⁶ “From Bafaw to Lagos,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

⁸³⁷ “From Bafaw to Lagos,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 7 May 1953.

⁸³⁸ “Cameroons Bloc to Contest Elections,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 18 June 1953.

⁸³⁹ “Cameroons Bloc to Contest Elections,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 18 June 1953.

⁸⁴⁰ Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁸⁴¹ Record of Proceedings of the Nigeria Constitution Conference, London 1953

⁸⁴² *Record of Proceedings of the Nigeria Constitution Conference, London 1953.*

power of choice of representatives being subjected to the whims caprices of a Nigerian majority in the House of Assembly.

The absorption of the territory into the Eastern House of Assembly is a contradiction of the principle which requires its evolution as a distinct entity. Resolution No. 9 of the Trusteeship Council Meeting of July 1951 provides as a safeguard that elections of Cameroons Members to the House of Representatives shall reflect the wishes of the Cameroons Members in the Eastern House of Assembly notwithstanding the Nigerian majority in that House. Under the present constitution, it is impossible to implement the recommendation contained in the resolution.

The electoral system of the Northern Region does not provide for direct representation of Territory in the Northern House of Assembly. In this respect, the fundamental aim Trusteeship Administration is completely disregarded.

At this stage, it is necessary for the United Kingdom Government to indicate how it intends to develop the territory as a separate and viable entity to conform with the spirit and letter of the trusteeship agreement. It is clear that while the agreement provides for administrative unions it does not necessarily imply ultimate fusion of the territory with the adjacent dependency.

The present arrangement in the constitution under review gives a false impression to Nigerians that the ultimate outcome of the territory's association with Nigeria will lead to fusion. As a result of this false impression, some Nigerian leaders have indulged in free, wild assertions, claims and promises which indicate, in effect, that they believe that the destiny of the Cameroons lies in their hands.

Apart from our desire that adequate safeguards should be provided in a redrawn constitution, we wish to make it clear that it is the duty of Her Majesty's Government, in fulfilling Her treaty obligations, to the territory to make it impossible for the development of the territory towards a separate existence to overrun by the acquisitive, venturesome tendencies of any of the contiguous regions.⁸⁴³

The 1953 Nigerian Constitution Conference afforded the Cameroonian delegation, with Dr. Endeley as the loudest voice, the space to make their position known. Dr. Endeley asserted that Southern Cameroon should not be viewed on par with Nigeria's other three regions because it was a trusteeship. More importantly, he desired it to be viewed separately from Eastern Nigeria. As the conference continued, it became clear that members of the Cameroonian delegation were

⁸⁴³ *Record of Proceedings of the Nigeria Constitution Conference, London 1953.*

positioning for administrative autonomy from Eastern Nigeria.⁸⁴⁴ The initial creation of the House of Representatives regarded Southern Cameroon as part of Eastern Nigeria. Hon. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, NPC, asserted his apprehension at the possibility of a separation of Southern Cameroon from the Eastern House based on his fear of upsetting the balance of the three regions.⁸⁴⁵ The apprehension that other regions supported Southern Cameroon created a rift among those in attendance.

A watershed moment in the history of Southern Cameroon and Nigeria occurred at 10 Carlton House Terrace in London on 13 August 1953 when Rt. Hon. Oliver Lyttelton, the Secretary of State of the Colonies, met with the Cameroonian delegation. The decision resulting from this meeting set in motion the climax that became the 1961 Plebiscite.⁸⁴⁶ Dr. Endeley and his team made it clear that they envisioned a united Cameroon, comprising both Southern Cameroon and Northern Cameroon, administered as a separate regional unit. This vision spoke to a fervent Pan-Cameroonian ideology that spread across both Southern and French Cameroon. It is interesting that during such meetings, no unification with French Cameroon was mentioned. Abba Habib quickly dispelled any such notion reinforcing Northern Cameroon's commitment with Northern Nigeria. Abba Habib made it clear that Northern Cameroon was not concerned with the possibility that the region would lose its access to Southern Cameroonian CDC revenue.⁸⁴⁷

Pan-Cameroonian political parties took root in the 1950s with the goal of creating a path to unify all of Cameroon. The Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC), comprising French and Southern Cameroonians, marketed itself as unification experts who could study and implement the unification of Cameroon. Paul Difo critiqued the KUNC for its attempt to take a position in

⁸⁴⁴*Record of Proceedings of the Nigeria Constitution Conference, London 1953.*

⁸⁴⁵*Record of Proceedings of the Nigeria Constitution Conference, London 1953.*

⁸⁴⁶*Record of Proceedings of the Nigeria Constitution Conference, London 1953.*

⁸⁴⁷*Record of Proceedings of the Nigeria Constitution Conference, London 1953.*

Eastern politics,⁸⁴⁸ specifically, for the role many of its French members tried to play in patronizing Eastern House politicians. Throughout the decade, the relationship between politicians and Pan-Cameroonians grew closer, with French Cameroonians, as strangers, playing an ever-increasing role, even if behind the scenes.⁸⁴⁹

Undeterred at being spurned by Northern Cameroon, Dr. Endeley made it known that he wished for Southern Cameroon to become a separate region, with legislative and executive representation in the Central Nigerian Legislature and Council of Ministers.⁸⁵⁰ Dr. Endeley stated that he could call for such action because he was the voice of the people. It was at this moment that Mbile argued for an inquiry to ascertain the feelings of the majority of people, saying “if Dr. Endeley’s party wins the majority of the seats, the issue will then be beyond all reasonable doubt.”⁸⁵¹ The colonial government intended to use the election as a litmus test to gauge the opinion of the people.

It was understood that if the KNC won the upcoming election, Southern Cameroon would be assured regional autonomy, leading to a fever pitch not only of campaigning but the political exploitation of Igbo xenophobia. Primary elections took place from September 21 to December 8, while secondary elections followed between December 28 and January 4.⁸⁵² The KNC began the campaign by politicizing an unfortunate event that occurred as the party left Nigeria from the Kano airport for London. Unknown people in the crowd who arrived to witness the departure threw stones at Dr. Endeley and his party. On their return, the KNC filled a truck with stones and paraded

⁸⁴⁸ “K.U.N.C. and Nigerian Politics,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 5 June 1953.

⁸⁴⁹ “K.U.N.C. and Nigerian Politics,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 5 June 1953.

⁸⁵⁰ *Record of Proceedings of the Nigeria Constitution Conference*, London, 1953.

⁸⁵¹ *Record of Proceedings of the Nigeria Constitution Conference*, London 1953.

⁸⁵² Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

them across Southern Cameroon. Amaazee remarked that in a country where Nigeria was synonymous with Igbo, the Igbo had stoned Dr. Endeley.⁸⁵³

The actions of Dr. Endeley and the KNC did not go unnoticed. A crowd of 200 were described as “spell-bound and interested throughout” as Mr. J. F. Gana, the Headmaster of the R.C.M. School in Soppo, delivered a lecture titled the “Evils of Tribal Discrimination” at the Tiko Native Court Hall.⁸⁵⁴ Gana told the crowd that such discrimination had no place, and Cameroonians should unite with all people.⁸⁵⁵

In September 1953, the Buea Igbo Union (BIU) submitted a petition due to increased discrimination resulting from KNC agitation.⁸⁵⁶ The BIU alleged that they were being threatened with violence and appealed for police protection. H. H. Brigadier E. J. Gibbons, the C.B.E. Commissioner for the Cameroons, assured the Union that the “Igbos in the Cameroons will enjoy the same police protection against illegal molestation as other residents in this territory.”⁸⁵⁷ Igbos, as all Cameroonians and strangers, were protected legally by Article 9 of the Trusteeship Agreement of the Cameroons under the British Administration.⁸⁵⁸ Mr. Dinbonge, the KNC President, and Hon. P. N. Motomby-Woleta of the Kamerun Peoples Party (KPP) stated that they “deplored the employment in the election campaign of any appeal to tribal animosity.”⁸⁵⁹ Political parties were urged to get their rank and file members in order. The blame for aggressive actions and maltreatment was placed on the grassroot members.

⁸⁵³Victor Bong Amaazee, “The ‘Igbo Scare’ in British Cameroon, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990):281-293.

⁸⁵⁴ “Evils of Tribal Discrimination,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 10 September 1953.

⁸⁵⁵ “Evils of Tribal Discrimination,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 10 September 1953.

⁸⁵⁶ “Comcam Reassured Ibos: No Discrimination,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 17 September 1953.

⁸⁵⁷ “Comcam Reassured Ibos: No Discrimination,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 17 September 1953.

⁸⁵⁸ “Comcam Reassured Ibos: No Discrimination,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 17 September 1953.

⁸⁵⁹ “Comcam Reassured Ibos: No Discrimination,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 17 September 1953.

Whether dictated from the top or fueled by grassroots animosity, the ripple effect of stranger anxiety impacted daily life and all forms of politics in Southern Cameroon as the election drew near. The Tiko Village Group Council became fractured because of party politics. Government reports indicated that “some of the members, it is learnt, are suspicious of other councilors and do not agree with the latter’s liberal attitude towards strangers.”⁸⁶⁰ Allegations claimed the council passed ruinous laws and allowed strangers to build zinc houses.⁸⁶¹ The Tiko Village Group Council deplored the introduction of jealousy and politics into their meetings.

Just as alarming as the threats made toward Igbo communities and the political fragmentation of Cameroonian councils was the explosive uncovering of voter fraud.⁸⁶² Victoria voter lists were purged because “a good number of qualified voters, notably Nigeria and a few Cameroonians, were cleverly omitted, while many French Cameroonians who constitutionally are not eligible to vote, figured prominently in the list.”⁸⁶³ All British subjects in Southern Cameroon were eligible to vote, including Cameroonians, Nigerians, Gold Coast, and West Indians.⁸⁶⁴ The only people not able to vote were French Cameroonians, who were not British subjects.⁸⁶⁵ Kumba initially passed a petition asking the government to “not allow non-Cameroonians to vote during the forthcoming elections.”⁸⁶⁶ The Kumba D.O. rejected the petition because it was a regular election. Thus, as British subjects, they could not be disenfranchised. Attempts to separate Cameroonian voters from Nigerian voters were not an isolated case. The Executive Committee of

⁸⁶⁰ “Politics in Tiko Group Council,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 17 September 1953.

⁸⁶¹ “Politics in Tiko Group Council,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 17 September 1953.

⁸⁶² “Cleaning the Voters List,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 17 September 1953.

⁸⁶³ “Cleaning the Voters List,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 17 September 1953.

⁸⁶⁴ “Cleaning the Voters List,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 17 September 1953.

⁸⁶⁵ “Cleaning the Voters List,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 17 September 1953.

⁸⁶⁶ “French Cameroonians and Coming Elections,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 1 October 1953.

the Bakweri Youth Association passed a resolution that demanded the creation of two separate voting categories, one for only Cameroonian voters and the second for non-Cameroonians.⁸⁶⁷

Dr. Endeley and the KNC handily won twelve of the possible thirteen Eastern House seat, with the remaining seat filled by Mr. S. E. Neha, a registered independent.⁸⁶⁸ Mbile and the KPP were summarily defeated. All elected members boycotted the re-opening of the Eastern House of Assembly, choosing instead to protest in support of regional autonomy.⁸⁶⁹ The KNC, during an earlier meeting in Mamfe, developed a unified plan of action for the upcoming Lagos Constitutional Conference.⁸⁷⁰

At the Lagos Constitutional Conference, the wishes of Dr. Endeley and the KNC came to fruition as Southern Cameroon received quasi-federal autonomy.⁸⁷¹ No longer would Southern Cameroon be administered as part of the Eastern Region. Dr. Endeley stressed that he had no desire to break away from the federation but welcomed increased political freedom.⁸⁷² Financially, Southern Cameroon operated a deficit that was supplemented by the Nigerian Federation.⁸⁷³ Colonial documents indicate this deficit was due to the Southern Cameroon mono-economy, meaning that the CDC was the largest regional taxpayer.⁸⁷⁴

The 1953 Eastern House of Assembly crisis gave Southern Cameroonians the autonomy they long coveted. The vilification of the Igbo community as a stranger added undue pressure on

⁸⁶⁷ "French Cameroonians and Coming Elections," *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 1 October 1953.

⁸⁶⁸ "French Cameroonians and Coming Elections," *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 1 October 1953.

⁸⁶⁹ "Cameroons Boycott Eastern House," *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 14 January 1954.

⁸⁷⁰ "Cameroons Boycott Eastern House," *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 14 January 1954.

⁸⁷¹ "No Ministers in Cameroon Exco. But Members will be assigned Subjects," *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 28 January 1954.

⁸⁷² "No Ministers in Cameroon Exco. But Members will be assigned Subjects," *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 28 January 1954.

⁸⁷³ "No Ministers in Cameroon Exco. But Members will be assigned Subjects," *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 28 January 1954.

⁸⁷⁴ "No Ministers in Cameroon Exco. But Members will be assigned Subjects," *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 28 January 1954.

the community. The contentious position of Igbos in Cameroon was referenced in Enugu during the meeting of 125 branches of the Igbo State Union. The union expressed “grave concern for the lives and properties of Igbos living in Southern Cameroon.”⁸⁷⁵ The Igbo State Union further stated that “steps should be taken immediately by the government to avert possible political disaster and civil strife. Use your good office, as a Protectorate and Trusteeship Authority to intervene immediately as the plight of the Igbos in Cameroon is precariously approaching an intolerable point.”⁸⁷⁶ Early that year, the Commissioner had indicated that all strangers would be protected from molestation in Southern Cameroon.

Conclusion

In 1928, Frank Achebe left Ogidì for Southern Cameroon, following the Inwellian spirit, but he was only part of a continuation of Igbo migration that had begun decades prior. Both civil servants and laborers saw Southern Cameroon as a land of opportunity offering advancement. However, in the eyes of some Southern Cameroonians, Igbo migrants were mere opportunists, a sentiment not isolated to Southern Cameroon. Across Nigeria, Igbo communities became increasingly ostracized for the same reasons that they were initially welcomed. Stranger anxiety reached new heights as political rivalries became entrenched, and as independence drew closer.

Through the quotidian experiences of civil servants and laborers, this chapter has argued that relationships in Southern Cameroon were far more egalitarian than confrontational. Moreover, this chapter has highlighted how colonial mismanagement of the stranger crisis and emphasis on regionalism fueled fear of the Igbo presence more so than daily issues. It was politically easier to create fear of the Igbo in the market, on the road, in the canoe, or in the office than it was to develop clear political goals. Southern Cameroonian politicians supported on a platform whose primary

⁸⁷⁵ “Jaja Wachuku removed from Ibo Union Post,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 22 April 1954.

⁸⁷⁶ “Jaja Wachuku removed from Ibo Union Post,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 22 April 1954.

goal was autonomy from an “Igbo Scare,” which was more fiction than fact. As the decade of the 1950s moved forward, the marriage between political and stranger anxiety became more intimate and singularly focused on the Igbo. Though Southern Cameroon and Nigeria were pulled politically further apart, through the Calabar-Mamfe Road, they physically became linked for the first time.

CHAPTER 4:

“WE WHO WEAR THE SHOES AND KNOW WHERE THEY PINCH US”: THE CALABAR-MAMFE ROAD, BCC SCHEME AND THE STRUGGLE FOR UNIONIZATION, 1945-1960

I submissively beg ‘his worship’ to assist me with the necessary advice, how to join the farmers on the Calabar-Mamfe Road as one of the farmers. I am hoping for discharge December 1955. When I am discharged my pension will be reduced, thereby I will be very much unable to feed and clothe my family. So, I am anxious to get something doing, and my aim is to become a farmer on this road. I have gain sufficient experience on farming method while in Itu Colony, so no doubt I will do well. Hoping my application will receive your kind approval of which I will be every much obliged.⁸⁷⁷

James Inyang, a member of the Itu Leper Colony, in his letter to the Calabar D.O., highlights the appeal the Calabar-Mamfe Road offered men like himself and their families.⁸⁷⁸ Moreover, Calabar-Mamfe road laborers, who transitioned to the Kwa Falls Settlement, which was known as a place “where land [was] enough for big farms,” recognized land as an opportunity to reinvent themselves.⁸⁷⁹ In leaving the Itu Leper Colony, the settlement would have allowed Inyang to remake himself on his own terms, separate from the stigma of leprosy. Although the Calabar D.O. received the well-intentioned appeal, he was unable to accept Inyang because the settlement had reached capacity.⁸⁸⁰

By 1953, it was common for lorries from Victoria, Bamenda, Kumba, Enugu, and Onitsha to spend weekends parked in Mamfe.⁸⁸¹ The Mamfe community responded by building a market next to the road that catered to “strangers staying in Mamfe such as clerks, police constables, teachers, laborers, and messengers” until the citizens of the town chose to move the daily market away from the road.⁸⁸² A. Etams of Babang, Mamfe, appealed to the local authorities to reopen the

⁸⁷⁷ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

⁸⁷⁸ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, re 3.3.230.

⁸⁷⁹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, re 3.3.230.

⁸⁸⁰ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, re 3.3.230.

⁸⁸¹ “Daily Marker of Mamfe,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 6 August 1953.

⁸⁸² “Daily Marker of Mamfe,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 6 August 1953.

market; because he realized that moving the market was “a great impediment to the social and commercial progress of Mamfe.”⁸⁸³

The Calabar-Mamfe Road was instrumental in fostering economic development between Calabar and Mamfe as well as further simplifying trading for enterprising Igbo men and women who previously relied solely on the Cross River.⁸⁸⁴ Though the sea and creeks remained important to smugglers who circumnavigated taxes, the appeals of Inyang and Etams emphasize the tremendous impact the road had on both their lives and the community.⁸⁸⁵ The colonial government recognized the abundance of unused land, specifically the palm stands, between Calabar and Mamfe, with many officials referring to it as the untapped palm belt.⁸⁸⁶ To address two issues, the colonial government used Igbo and Ibibio men from the dense Eastern Region to both build the road and settle in experimental communities based on palm cultivation at Kwa Falls, Camp III, Mile 25, and Aningeje.⁸⁸⁷ Finding the necessary labor was never difficult as an unnamed Calabar D.O. remarked that “local labour, mostly Ibos and Ibibios who wander to Calabar looking for work, from overpopulated areas, is proving sufficient for the present work.”⁸⁸⁸ Following WWII, the abundance of decommissioned soldiers returning to Nigeria motivated to make a better life for themselves further added to this reservoir of laborers.⁸⁸⁹ Chronicling the construction of the Calabar-Mamfe Road and the experiences of settlers, this chapter extends the history of the Igbo labor migration between Southern Cameroon and Eastern Nigeria, showing how its development was regionally and socially transformative. Moreover, it narrates the difficulties the settlers and laborers faced to unionize, highlighting the threats these political actions brought into their lives.

⁸⁸³“Daily Marker of Mamfe,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 6 August 1953.

⁸⁸⁴ Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of, NAC, CADIST 13.1.237.

⁸⁸⁵ Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of, NAC, CADIST 13.1.237.

⁸⁸⁶ Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of, NAC, CADIST 13.1.237.

⁸⁸⁷ Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of, NAC, CADIST 13.1.237.

⁸⁸⁸ Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of, NAC, CADIST 13.1.237.

⁸⁸⁹ Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of, NAC, CADIST 13.1.237.

Constructing the Calabar-Mamfe Road and the Bamenda-Cross-River-Calabar Scheme

Regional development boards, which later became regional development corporations, were an essential part of the post-war Nigerian experience. These boards supported indigenous enterprise by investing in agriculture, manufacturing, banking, insurance, finance, property, and hospitality, and as their growth coincided with the Nigerianization of politics, many of the executive members were the Nigerian political and economic elite.⁸⁹⁰

In Enugu on the morning of 12 January 1944, the Cameroon Provincial Development and Welfare Board (CPDWB), whose purpose was to influence post-war planning and development, held its first meeting.⁸⁹¹ On the agenda was the discussion of the direction of a road linking Southern Cameroon and Nigeria. The road, a regional project representing a long-term investment in the future of Southern Cameroon and Nigeria, was an extension of construction already underway in Southern Cameroon.⁸⁹² The completion of the Kumba-Mamfe Road facilitated a more significant internal movement of large vehicles that previously used roads in French Cameroon, a 2,000-mile detour from Fort Lamy, Maiduguri.⁸⁹³ As historian Marcus Filippello notes, roads are essential in facilitating the movement of goods, services, people, and accelerating national development.⁸⁹⁴ If Southern Cameroon remained connected to Nigeria only through ports, it would be challenging to maintain a national identity. P. G. Harris, Chairman and Senior Resident believed

⁸⁹⁰ Tom Forrest, *The Advance of African Capital: The Growth of Nigerian Private Enterprise*, (London: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 26; Peter Kilby, *Industrialization in an Open Economy: Nigeria 1945-66*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 331.

⁸⁹¹ Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁸⁹² Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁸⁹³ Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁸⁹⁴ Marcus Filippello, *The Nature of the Path: Reading a West African Road*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 31

that Southern Cameroon would remain an “isolated outpost” until it was physically linked with Nigeria.⁸⁹⁵

The purpose of the Calabar-Cross River-Cameroon-Development Plan was to acquire “large tracts of land and let 10-acre plots to a settler in a virgin state” which, after a specified amount of time, “settlers would be required to clear these plots and grow palm trees according to expert direction.”⁸⁹⁶ Palm oil was not only the most essential commodity in Eastern Nigeria, but in a post-war world, it reached new importance globally, demanded by both American and British markets.⁸⁹⁷ According to an unnamed D.O., the government wanted to “introduce settlers on a rented basis” to thirty-year leases, after which time the land would become freehold,⁸⁹⁸ a long-term plan that dramatically altered the landscape and the lives of the men involved.

An unnamed D.O. referenced the impact that strangers had in Kumba beyond plantation work:

Kumba strangers at present were mainly Grassfield and Igbo. The Grassfield owing to racial affinity were long established and were jacks of all trades. The Igbos were largely concerned with petty trading. But both communities were allowed all the land they wanted rent free.⁸⁹⁹

The Calabar-Cross River-Cameroon-Development Plan viewed these strangers as an untapped asset and promoted the idea that future plans under its direction would use their labor.⁹⁰⁰ A more refined iteration of the Calabar-Cross River-Cameroon-Development Plan was the Bamenda-Mamfe-Cross River-Calabar Development Scheme (BCC Scheme).⁹⁰¹ Colonial officials did not

⁸⁹⁵*Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139. Daniel Olisa Iweze, “The Importance of Inter-Modal Transport System in Nigeria with Reference to the Asaba-Onitsha Transport Corridor Since the Pre-Colonial Period,” *Lagos Historical Review*, Vol. 15, Issue 1 (2016).

⁸⁹⁶*Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139

⁸⁹⁷ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁸⁹⁸*Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139

⁸⁹⁹*Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NEA, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁹⁰⁰ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁹⁰¹*Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

view Southern Cameroon separate from Eastern Nigeria.⁹⁰² The BCC Scheme was the embodiment of the development of the Bamenda-Cross River-Calabar Region.

The development of the Bamenda-Cross River-Calabar region was the brainchild of Mr. Oliphant.⁹⁰³ The road itself would not only link Calabar and Mamfe but also link Central Africa through British and French Cameroon, providing “improved trade outlets from the Bamenda Highlands and Mamfe Division through the port of Calabar.”⁹⁰⁴ The secondary purpose of the BCC Scheme was “to open up the Calabar-Cross-River hinterland for settlement of it, for the most part, to sparsely populated areas by demobilized pioneers and excess population from the congested areas of eastern provinces further to the west.”⁹⁰⁵ To achieve this goal, settlements were established at Kwa Falls, Oban, and Osomba, and additional informal settlements popped up as traders, and family members followed road construction. Some of these informal settlers were later recruited as formal settlers, while others dispersed themselves between Calabar and Mamfe.⁹⁰⁶

On 9 June 1944, the CPDWB endorsed the Mamfe-Ikom-Bansara Road, the shortest of the proposed options, which required a bridge over the Cross River.⁹⁰⁷ As a result, the Calabar-Cross River-Cameroon Development Plan and the BCC Scheme absorbed decommissioned soldiers as well as men from the population-dense Owerri Province.⁹⁰⁸ In January 1945, construction of the Calabar-Mamfe Road began at Calabar, and while hopes were high for speedy progress, by June laborers had completed only two miles.⁹⁰⁹ Progress intensified when Mr. H. J. M Harding became

⁹⁰² Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁹⁰³ Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁹⁰⁴ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁹⁰⁵ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁹⁰⁶ Walter Gam Nkwi, *African Modernities and Mobilities: An Historical Ethnography of Kom Cameroon, 1800-2008*, (Bamenda: Langa Publishing, 2015), 243.

⁹⁰⁷ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139. In the initial discussion held by the CPDWB, three road projects were proposed: Mamfe-Ikom-Bansara Road, Bamenda-Menchen Valley-Obudu Road, and Calabar-Mamfe Road.

⁹⁰⁸ Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁹⁰⁹ Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

Administrative Chief and Mr. Arthur O'Dwyer became an Engineering Expert. After six months, Harding and O'Dwyer built several bridges and twelve miles of road.⁹¹⁰

Under the Public Works Department (PWD) and Overseer Usen, 100 men constructed the Calabar-Mamfe pioneer road, which followed the bicycle path created in 1909 by anthropologist P. A. Talbots during his regional study.⁹¹¹ Laborers accomplished this herculean task but refused to be mistreated or underpaid.⁹¹² In March 1945 at Oban, laborers presented their first protest comprised of five precise complaints to the D.O:

1. The piece of work is too hard.
2. They want more money because three cups of garri per day is nothing compared to the nine that they could eat.
3. They want a medicine box with some bandage and iodine and quinine.
4. They want a communal kitchen built so that their wives or boys can come and cook for them.
5. Hours of work to be 7-11:30, noon-3: 30 pm.⁹¹³

Immediately, the D.O. approved the fifth request and believing the fourth was reasonable, advised laborers to “get on with it.”⁹¹⁴ After further reflecting on their second point, the laborers reframed it, stating they preferred more money rather than garri.⁹¹⁵ The first request was difficult to address because the men were building a pioneer road, and as such, “the nature of each obstacle varies.”⁹¹⁶ Construction slowed because men were living and working in virgin land that offered none of the amenities of the city. However, the D.O.s willingness to listen and accept some of the laborers’

⁹¹⁰ *Cameroons Provincial Development and Welfare Boards*, NAE, RIVPROF 9-1-1139.

⁹¹¹ *Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.237; P.A. Talbot published the following works about his time in Southeastern Nigeria: *Life in Southern Nigeria: The Magic, Royalty and Customs of the Ibibio Tribe*, (London:1923) and *Mr. and Mrs. P.A. Talbots Collection of Books in the Oban District, South Nigeria*, (London, 1913).

⁹¹² *Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.237.

⁹¹³ *Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.237.

⁹¹⁴ *Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.237.

⁹¹⁵ *Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.237.

⁹¹⁶ *Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.237.

demands was essential in getting the men to accept not only building the road but also future plans.⁹¹⁷

Construction of the Calabar-Mamfe Road naturally became an important regional fixture, and the press was keen to report on its progress. Candidus, an *Eastern Nigerian Mail* correspondent, reported that “550 [men] one-third of whom are Ibibios, most of the rest Ibos” with only 15 Efik had built the road to within two miles of Kwa Falls.⁹¹⁸ Construction relied heavily on decommissioned soldiers, and while many of these men lacked advanced formal education, they were empowered by their military service to England to seek more social advancements than they had prior to the war.⁹¹⁹

Tommy Etuk Udo began working as a learning surveyor for the Calabar-Mamfe Road on 9 May 1946 shortly after his military service.⁹²⁰ When the Kwa Falls settlement applications opened, Udo quickly applied. However, on 18 February 1947, he presented the following petition to Mr. Mayne, the Calabar D.O., asserting that he had been wrongful terminated on 8 January 1947:

I submit Sir, that on that road I was made to be under Mr. Ekpenyong, the Government Senior Surveyor. That with the best of my knowledge I laboured to please my Senior Officer but as Mr. Ekpenyong was not in my favour I was reported to Mr. Harden and Mr. H. Newman who called my attention and told me that Mr. Ekpenyong reported me that I could not work. That Sir, I pleaded to them that the report was false and begged my Officers to call the attention of the labourers in my gang and ask of my ability.⁹²¹

⁹¹⁷ Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of, NAE, CADIST 13.1.237.

⁹¹⁸ “A Lightning Visit to The Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 16 February 1946.

⁹¹⁹ “A Lightning Visit to The Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 16 February 1946.

⁹²⁰ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE.

⁹²¹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE.

The Calabar Welfare Office recommended Udo's reinstatement; however, Mayne ignored the recommendation.⁹²² Udo believed that repeated false statement made by Ekpenyong impeded his return, and he expressed this belief in greater detail throughout his petition:

Mr. Ekpenyong who knew my intelligent referred the two Officers to correspond to my reports that I was lacking educational attainments which was cause of my dismissal. That according to Mr. Ekepenyong's report to Mr. Harden that even the labourers under my control are better than myself that I am unfit for the job and that Mr. Harden reported same to the Welfare Officer who called my attention and referred me to that.⁹²³

Udo countered this false claim by asserting that it was under his leadership that laborers repaired the road from "Obutong Beach to the Water Falls without the assistance of Ekpenyong,"⁹²⁴ maintenance which Harding could confirm because he was present when it was done. Udo ended his petition writing, "I am sure that Government will not ignore my services I did in the Army and make me to suffer after I have free and cry for liberty and freedom."⁹²⁵ Veterans were not afraid to directly confront political and economic injustices when they encountered them in their daily lives or in the workplace. Referring to his military service, Udo challenged Mayne to provide him with the same support he had provided to England when it was in need.⁹²⁶ Udo, as a veteran and prospective settler, was invested in the future of the Calabar-Mamfe Road and the BCC Scheme.

Ekpenyong felt Udo was "useless as a surveyor, and as a labourer" but perhaps more detrimental was his claim to Mr. Harden and Mr. Newman that "his house boy James would be able to read, compass and trace out maps," far better than Udo.⁹²⁷ Moreover, Newman asserted he found him "to be useless as a person."⁹²⁸ Harding, in support of his colleagues, wrote, "the main

⁹²² Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE.

⁹²³ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹²⁴ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹²⁵ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹²⁶ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE.

⁹²⁷ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹²⁸ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

trouble with the petitioner is his own inordinate self-conceit, which makes him think he alone in all the world is ill-used, and he alone is efficient.”⁹²⁹ The recommendations made by Ekpenyong, Harden, and Newman were presented to Mayne, three against the single voice of Udo.⁹³⁰ Mayne did not offer the assistance Udo desired. Instead, he sided with the BCC Scheme in support of termination, writing that Udo was “unlikely to become an efficient employee.”⁹³¹ Neither his military service nor commitment to the long-term vision of the Calabar-Mamfe Authority was enough to protect Udo from these false claims.⁹³² Udo lacked union support that in later years would aid laborers who found themselves in similar positions.

Oban, which measured 1,200 square miles, was initially significant only because the Calabar-Mamfe Road ran through it.⁹³³ A medical survey inadvertently initiated during the rainy season at the behest of the BCC Scheme enhanced Oban’s importance when it reported that “the total population [was] approximately 1,800,” which amounted to 1.45 people per square mile.⁹³⁴ “With the exception of small cleared areas,” Oban was “a dense rainforest.”⁹³⁵ Supporting the vision of the Calabar-Cross River-Cameroon-Development Plan, the medical survey proposed the establishment of palm oil plantations.⁹³⁶ In such situations, laborers would clear the dense rainforest and subsequently be recruited as settlers.⁹³⁷ The medical survey recommended the construction of plantations in the vicinity of the road being built from Ikot-Efonga through Oban

⁹²⁹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹³⁰ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE.

⁹³¹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹³² *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE.

⁹³³ *Bamenda-Cross River-Calabar Scheme: Medical Reports*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/555.

⁹³⁴ *Bamenda-Cross River-Calabar Scheme: Medical Reports*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/555.

⁹³⁵ *Bamenda-Cross River-Calabar Scheme: Medical Reports*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/555.

⁹³⁶ *Bamenda-Cross River-Calabar Scheme: Medical Reports*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/555.

⁹³⁷ *Bamenda-Cross River-Calabar Scheme: Medical Reports*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/555.

to Mamfe. The survey set in motion the development of a large area of land that converged to one point, the stranger population, demobilized soldiers, and modernization plans.⁹³⁸

On 4 April 1948, Lawani Ikari presented the following complaint against the BCC Scheme concerning the destruction of his farm during the Calabar-Mamfe Road construction:

I have the honour most respectfully to submit this to you as regards to my crops at the Calabar Mamfe road which was damaged. I planted my crops in one of the plots there which they had not used the plot for any building and I was one of the labourers there. The D.O. stopped me and asked me to leave the job, and I left without taking away my crops because it was not yet up for harvesting, but to my surprise when I went there to see my farm, I found all the crops in the farm cut down and the plot used for building. Having seen this, I reported the matter to the D.O. in charge with two letters following claiming for the crops which I do not have anything up till now. I planted many crops in the farm together with the payment for the labourers who worked in the farm amounted to (£5.13.7 ½ d) five pounds, thirteen shillings, and seven pence half penny. I beg sir, to help me so as to enable me to get my claim for the loss crops. I am old, and my hope was in this farm to feed myself and my children.⁹³⁹

The events which led to this petition began in 1946 when Harding ordered a farm established at Mile 42 ahead of laborers at Mile 15.⁹⁴⁰ While the Ikot Efanga market located near Mile 15 was the laborers' primary food source, no such market existed in the vicinity of Mile 42.⁹⁴¹ The farm met the needs of laborers as construction advanced past the Ikot Efanga market. Harding placed Salami in charge, who, in return with permission, hired Ikari.⁹⁴² Harding stated the following regarding the construction of the farm and dismissal of Ikari:

I noted in May that the petitioner, who was an oldish ex-soldier, did not do much work himself, the active supervision of the farm being in the hands of a much younger and more able man. When I returned from leave in December 1947, I met Mr. Pickering, then in charge of the road, and we discussed the future of the farm. I suggested that no further crops should be planted, but that all available cassava should be converted into garri and that the personnel should gradually be reduced. I was amazed to find that the petitioner was still there, and advised that he should be sacked since he was in my view a luxury utterly

⁹³⁸ Bamenda-Cross River-Calabar Scheme: Medical Reports, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/555.

⁹³⁹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹⁴⁰ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹⁴¹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹⁴² *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

uneconomical—and indeed I expressed surprise that he had not been sacked long since. Mr. Pickering accordingly sacked him, just as he could sack any other labourer or headman, presumably with either a day’s notice, or with a day’s wage in lieu.

The petitioner never had any right whatsoever to plant crops on the land, which was held by the road on a temporary occupation license from chief of Oban and can therefore have no claim for any alleged loss of harvest through his being sacked. Concerning the cutting down of his crops, and the setting up of buildings on that land, I know nothing, but, as he had no legal right to be planting there at all, he can now claim no compensation.⁹⁴³

Rix Trott, who supervised the road construction during the time the petition covered, noted that the farm was not destroyed.⁹⁴⁴ In May 1948, the Calabar D.O. supported the BCC Scheme writing to Ikari:

The land on which you state you planted your crops was held on a temporary occupation license from the chiefs of Oban for official purposes, and your position there was as supervisor of the labour required during the period the farm was in use. You had no right to make any private farm there, and consequently, you have no claim for compensation.⁹⁴⁵

While the Calabar D.O’s. words were clear, they contradicted what the farm meant to Ikari. For Ikari, the farm represented a future that would allow him to take care of his family. Ikari’s situation further highlights the motivation of the laborers to settle on the land.

The BCC Scheme acquired 5,000-6,000 acres of land in the vicinity of Kwa Falls to accommodate 200 settlers and their families through two methods: first as a by-product of the Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority and second because the Ekoi sold their land.⁹⁴⁶ Kwa Falls used hand oil presses and pioneer oil mills to process its 1,000 acres of cultivated palm.⁹⁴⁷ In January 1946 the BCC Scheme commenced clearing 300-acres, and laborers “dismissed from the Calabar-Mamfe road [were] taken on and paid from money advanced” to the

⁹⁴³*Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹⁴⁴ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹⁴⁵*Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

⁹⁴⁶*Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁴⁷ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

scheme.⁹⁴⁸ These men who primarily came from the overpopulated Owerri and Calabar Divisions lived in the deserted construction camps at Mile 32 or in the villages of Aningeje or Ndingane while they cleared the land, with many aspiring to remain on as the scheme transitioned into its settlement phase.⁹⁴⁹

The 300 acres cleared turned the aspirations of the BCC Scheme into a reality; it was no longer only an idea.⁹⁵⁰ In March, following a controlled burn, crops were planted, and in June, laborers interplanted palm. Interplanting continued for two years, with plans in place for laborers to clear an additional 500-600 acres the following years.⁹⁵¹ In June 1949, the intention was for the remaining 1,000 acres to be planted, with the hope that the intense level of planting would justify the purchase of a Pioneer Oil Mill in 1954 or 1955.⁹⁵² In the intervening years, the BCC Scheme would rely on its three hand presses.⁹⁵³

Pioneer Oil Mills, the next industrial step in palm production, were far superior to hand presses; however, they required a tremendous amount of space and in 1946 cost £2,500, far out of the reach of small producers.⁹⁵⁴ These mills extracted oil from the palm while simultaneously using the shells of the kernels as fuel.⁹⁵⁵ Modern mill production was an innovation that allowed greater control over the quality of oil produced. However, the introduction of Pioneer Oil Mills led to protests in communities across Southeastern Nigeria by women who felt disenfranchised by the

⁹⁴⁸ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁴⁹ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁵⁰ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁵¹ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁵² *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁵³ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁵⁴ Nigerian Oil Palm Marketing Board, First Annual Report, 1940

⁹⁵⁵ Nina Mba, *Nigeria Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965*, (Berkeley, California: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1982), 107.

new method.⁹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, on plantations like those in Southern Cameroon and settlements such as the BCC Scheme, Pioneer Oil Mills became indispensable.⁹⁵⁷

In 1949, the Nigerian Oil Palm Produce Marketing Board put in place a strict set of standards for palm oil, which significantly impacted the local market.⁹⁵⁸ The board separated palm oil into both edible and technical grades. Edible oil had five grades with Grade 1, being the oil preferred for broader markets: “The standard prescribed for exportable oil is that of the first quality, which means the palm oil contains less than two percent of water or extraneous substances.”⁹⁵⁹ Before the war most of the palm oil produced in Eastern Nigeria had been technical grade, and now the Nigerian Oil Palm Produce Marketing Board desired to produce more edible palm oil at the local level.⁹⁶⁰ In 1949 only the CDC and UAC produced quality edible palm oil. The CDC, the flagship producer of the quality of palm oil Nigeria wished to export, produced palm oil under plantation supervision, a quality not easily attainable in the village.⁹⁶¹ The Kwa Falls Settlement not only intended to produce high-quality palm oil for the international market but it also planned to place the primary means of production in the hands of settlers, thus producing a burgeoning new economic class of men tapped into international economic system.⁹⁶²

In June, the BCC Scheme purchased “young palm seedlings” from the Agricultural Department and planted them on the cleared 300-acres.⁹⁶³ While the surrounding area was dense with maturing and full-grown palms, the BCC Scheme wanted Agricultural Department seedlings

⁹⁵⁶Nina Mba, *Nigeria Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965*, (Berkeley, California: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1982), 107.

⁹⁵⁷ Mba, *Nigeria Women Mobilized* 107.

⁹⁵⁸ Nigerian Oil Palm Marketing Board, First Annual Report, 1940

⁹⁵⁹ *Nigerian Oil Palm Marketing Board, First Annual Report*, 1940

⁹⁶⁰ Nigerian Oil Palm Marketing Board, First Annual Report, 1940

⁹⁶¹ *Annual Report of the Cameroons Development Corporation*, 1947.

⁹⁶² Nigerian Oil Palm Marketing Board, First Annual Report, 1940

⁹⁶³ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

because they were scientifically cultivated.⁹⁶⁴ Up to this point, the BCC Scheme had been in the early stages of deciding which men would become settlers. The application process, which was open to all who wished to apply, favored men from the Calabar-Mamfe Road.⁹⁶⁵ Those selected obtained a temporary occupation license that promised them a title and 15 acres of land.⁹⁶⁶ The purpose of the temporary occupation license was to ensure:

- (1) The payment of rent to the Authority at 5% of the initial capital value of the land, (cost of acquisition and clearing and cultivation of oil-palm);
- (2) The erection of approved standard of buildings, good cultivation of the land in accordance with general direction to be given from time to time by the Authority, and the proper observance of sanitary measures;
- (3) That not more persons shall live on the land than it can economically carry, and that no plots shall be sub-let to third parties.⁹⁶⁷

Laborers saw the benefits of life as a settler offered and overwhelmed the BCC Scheme with inquiries to such a degree that the following official statement was issued: “laborers will be discouraged from bringing either wives or relatives to the camp until the settlers have been chosen from among the laborers and other applicants. After this, settlers will be invited to bring to the camp their wives, children, and not more than one adult helper.”⁹⁶⁸ The BCC Scheme further asked that settlers take care of the land in a “husbandlike” fashion.⁹⁶⁹ Bringing their wives and children and being tasked with taking care of the land in a husbandlike fashion indicated settlers were putting down roots meant to last decades. Many of these men were veterans who returned to Nigeria to cut a modern road from the dense forest.⁹⁷⁰ However, in the following private correspondence, the BCC Scheme admitted the duplicitous nature of the ownership of land:

⁹⁶⁴ Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁶⁵ Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁶⁶ Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁶⁷ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁶⁸ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁶⁹ Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁷⁰ Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

It is of great importance that the settler should receive as early as possible an assured title to his oil-palm, compound and economic tree-areas, the final form of his farmland being the last to be assured. This early assurance must depend rather on confidence in the Authority than on legal documents.⁹⁷¹

The BCC Scheme admitted that the temporary occupation license conferred no lasting title.⁹⁷² The scheme reached its final form in 7-years, after which time settlers would legally own their plots.⁹⁷³

It is not clear, however, if settlers were aware of the murky nature of their temporary occupation license.

The Authority, through intricate loans, exerted a great deal of power over the settlers' lives. Laborers became trapped in a paternalistic form of credit that controlled the literal fruit of their labor.⁹⁷⁴

Credit up to £60 per settler will be provided under a form of loan agreement...and this is to be repaid together with an interest rate of 2 ½% by quarterly instalments within a period of fifteen years, provided that the Authority may at its discretion extend this period to twenty years. The loan agreement provides that all property in livestock, trees, crops and farm equipment purchased under the credit arrangement remains in the Authority to the extent of the unpaid balance of the loan.⁹⁷⁵

In 1947, settlers received laborer payment for planting the palms in June.⁹⁷⁶ Following the planting, laborers could work their holdings and were "paid subsistence while not working for the Authority until the first harvest" was complete.⁹⁷⁷ Paid subsistence was charged to the laborers' loan accounts and justified as motivation.⁹⁷⁸ The Authority made its position clear writing, "this is intended to prevent any possibility of settlers depending upon the subsistence to remain in idleness during this

⁹⁷¹*Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁷² *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁷³*Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁷⁴ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁷⁵ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁷⁶ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁷⁷*Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁷⁸ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

period.”⁹⁷⁹ From June to November, laborers received a percentage of full laborers’ pay.⁹⁸⁰ From December on, laborers were not paid but offered jobs through the scheme such as building roads and serving as staff in the administration houses.⁹⁸¹ This invasive approach put the Authority in direct conflict with the goals and aspirations of settlers. Because of the BCC Scheme, the relationship between the Authority and settlers played out through attempts by the latter to form active unions.⁹⁸²

Kwa Falls Settlers Union

Between 1944 and 1945 when most of us returned from the Army to settle at home, we read from the local newspapers of the proposal to open a scheme in the Calabar Division of the Calabar Province in the area cover with thick jungle. The District Officers of our Divisions made it a point of duty to explain to us in our local councils of the accumulating wealth awaiting us over there should we desire to leave our homes and go to settle there. We regarded our Administrative Officers as the type of people who cannot speak lies even in the face of odds. And, for that reason we left our homes for the place for good or for bad.⁹⁸³

The water from Kwa Falls, which originates in Mount Cameroon, flows into the Kwa River, Cross River, Calabar River, and Agbokim Waterfall, before finally flowing into the Atlantic Ocean. What drew the gaze of colonial officials was the abundance of fertile land around the falls.⁹⁸⁴ As a natural link between Eastern Nigeria and Southern Cameroon, the Kwa Falls Settlement is not a story of separation but unification. The men who built the road and those who used it to enter Southern Cameroon did not think they were entering a foreign land. During interview, the oral

⁹⁷⁹ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁸⁰ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁸¹ *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁸² *Bamenda Cross River Calabar Scheme: Planning Areas*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1556.

⁹⁸³ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.239

⁹⁸⁴ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.239

history collaborators stressed that going to Southern Cameroon was as natural as going to Lagos, Enugu, Onitsha, or Aba.⁹⁸⁵

In 1946, Ntoe Ika Ika Oqua II, President of the Calabar Council, wrote the editor of the *Nigerian Eastern Mail* about his impressions of his recent tour of the Calabar-Mamfe Road.⁹⁸⁶ Settlers at Mile 25 were awaiting their first harvest of “yams, cassava, groundnuts, and various other vegetables.”⁹⁸⁷ Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the settlement was the application of modern farming techniques intended to not only increase yield but also preserve the fertility of the land. Mr. Oqua II wrote, “instead of the crops being planted just in any sort of way, the plants have been spaced out carefully, and the ground has been ridged to prevent the heavy rains from washing away the valuable top layer of soil.”⁹⁸⁸ Settlers and local farmers offered him the opportunity to meet the Assistant Agricultural Officer to see demonstrations of modern practical farming techniques.⁹⁸⁹ Unfortunately, it had become common practice for the local farmers to plant their crops on steep slopes, which quickly removed nutrients from the land.⁹⁹⁰

A quick drive took Oqua II to Aningeje, where the BCC Scheme had built a five-acre palm nursery.⁹⁹¹ Oqua II wrote the following regarding what he witnessed during his tour of the nursery:

This is the most interesting place, where the young palm seedlings are evenly planted in beds, with leaf protection against the strong sun. At this place, although there is one slope, ‘ridging’ has been done to prevent the soil from being washed away. In a small swamp area, raffia is being planted and there is a small fruit tree nursery of lemons, oranges and other fruits, each tree is protected by a small fence so that it cannot be damaged in any way.⁹⁹²

⁹⁸⁵Oke Chukwu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State*, Nigeria, James Blackwell 16 September 2018.

⁹⁸⁶“A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁸⁷“A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁸⁸“A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁸⁹“A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁹⁰“A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁹¹“A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁹²“A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

Once palm seedlings grew to the desired maturity, they were transported to a location that offered more space for growth.⁹⁹³ Experiments with swamp rice and other vegetables held the possibility of generating surplus income.⁹⁹⁴ At the center of the endeavor was the Kwa Falls settlement.

Maintenance camps lined the road as men continued to work on it. Camp III, located at Mile 32, had “huts on either side of the road forming a square.”⁹⁹⁵ To meet their needs, laborers owned a shop so that they could buy goods for themselves and their families.⁹⁹⁶ Food was difficult to find because the road was far ahead of any village or farm. Shortages forced families to live off the land or wait an extended time for essential goods.⁹⁹⁷ A small hospital with two medical orderlies provided healthcare for workers who fell sick. Laborers who needed additional medical treatment went to the Calabar Hospital.⁹⁹⁸ Mr. Oqua II remarked that the road was drivable “to mile 37, and when one or two bridges are completed, it will be possible to go as far as mile 38 where construction work is in progress.”⁹⁹⁹ In two months, the road was scheduled to reach Oban at Mile 44 and then Mamfe, 106 miles from Calabar.¹⁰⁰⁰ The BCC Scheme intended to begin choosing settlers in the coming months.

By 1948, the focus of the BCC Scheme was the recruitment and economic development of the land.¹⁰⁰¹ According to Harding, the BCC Scheme Chairman, the scheme “can be seen at the moment as oil palms, timber and carpentry work, white lime, and possibly swamp rice.”¹⁰⁰² A pioneer oil mill and several hand oil presses were used to process the 1,000 acres of palm trees.¹⁰⁰³

⁹⁹³ “A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁹⁴ “A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁹⁵ “A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁹⁶ “A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁹⁷ “A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁹⁸ “A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

⁹⁹⁹ “A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

¹⁰⁰⁰ “A Visit to the Calabar-Mamfe Road,” *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, 24 August 1946.

¹⁰⁰¹ B.C.C. Scheme Staff, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹⁰⁰² B.C.C. Scheme Staff, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹⁰⁰³ B.C.C. Scheme Staff, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

When Harding visited the Calabar Oil Palm Estate and spoke with Morrison about the economic prospect of the BCC Scheme's palm production, the latter assured him that the estate's 6,000 acres paid handsomely and could "afford proper European supervision."¹⁰⁰⁴ Morrison also "considered that the mere 1,000 acres" allocated to the BCC Scheme were not large enough to become economical.¹⁰⁰⁵ The BCC Scheme, with time, intended to acquire more land for palm production with the only foreseen drawback being the ability of the Pioneer Mill to meet the processing needs during peak harvesting season.¹⁰⁰⁶

The most attractive element of the BCC Scheme was its goal to diversify the land.¹⁰⁰⁷ Harding believed that a developed Kwa Falls furniture industry could quickly rival the Hope Waddell Institute that was powered by hydro-electric power.¹⁰⁰⁸ An inspection by Mr. Ford, Inspector of Mines, found a good abundance of limestone in the area, with the only drawback being a lack of adequate machinery, important because schemes across Nigeria needed to be both productive and profitable.¹⁰⁰⁹ In light of these criteria, Harding reflected that the "BCC Scheme aims essentially at being a productive scheme, but that our experience so far shows that production of an economic type can only come from machine aids coupled with honesty; that machine aids themselves are useless unless they are properly and regularly maintained; and that such maintenance is inadequate unless properly supervised."¹⁰¹⁰ Missing from his analysis was the role of the people. Harding placed the machine over the role of African labor, a serious miscalculation that impacted the BCC Scheme.

¹⁰⁰⁴*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹⁰⁰⁵*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹⁰⁰⁶*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹⁰⁰⁷*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹⁰⁰⁸*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹⁰⁰⁹*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹⁰¹⁰*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

Laborers who began as construction workers and then transitioned to settlers initially had high hopes but later recalled the stark realities of life during the early days:

It was a terrible thing for some of us to realize at last that we were in a thick and unpenetrable area of the Calabar Mamfe Road only to chat with the wild animals. We were highly discouraged by the conditions of living over there and as a matter of fact, most of us decided to run away. But, through the tact of the abled District Officer generally known as the Officer in charge of the scheme in the person of Mr. H. J. M. Harding, we were persuaded to remain. Several good things were promised us as a sort of inducements to remain in order to open up the place. We were all made to work on the road from Mile 14 at Ikot Efana, felling huge trees, breaking stones and crossing bridges and etc. until when the new set of people have come in, and when we have reached a considerable length of distance, we were advised to break and sign for settlement. The administrative officers, e.g. Mr. H. J. M. Harding has won good name and promotions, but what is our share who have been the instruments of development.

At the time the agreement was drafted we strongly refused to accept the conditions not until something of the encouragement were included to help us at old age to compensate us at old age for the good work we have done to the government. We strongly objected to any compensation in cash in bulk but advocated for anything that would help us at old age or when we become too old to work or disabled on account of hard work.¹⁰¹¹

At Camp III, some men lived near the village while others resided “in the bush” in constant “fear of robbers and murderers.”¹⁰¹² The isolation of the living quarters changed their minds about the scheme, and nineteen fled.¹⁰¹³ Laborers who remained stated that many of these nineteen were “quite young and can make their fortunes elsewhere.”¹⁰¹⁴ D.O.s received letters about these men in an attempt to track them down, efforts which, for the most part, proved fruitless.¹⁰¹⁵ Four settlers

¹⁰¹¹ Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹⁰¹² Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹⁰¹³ Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹⁰¹⁴ Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹⁰¹⁵ Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAE, CADIST 13.1.239.

died, and one was sent to the Itu Leper Colony.¹⁰¹⁶ However, more threatening at this time was the overwhelming threat of danger: “There are so many unemployed job hunters in the village who will do anything to get some money, as you know some of them even attempted to remove the safe from the Kwa Falls Estate office.”¹⁰¹⁷ Of course, there were always more men waiting to take their place, men who were fascinated by the scheme’s appeal.¹⁰¹⁸

By June 1948, the situation was tense, and laborers formed the Kwa Falls Settlers Union.¹⁰¹⁹ A union allowed men to collectively challenge British perceptions of labor, authority, race, and control.¹⁰²⁰ The union first took action by presenting a petition to the Chief Commissioner as he toured the area. On the morning of 7 June 1948, Patrick Ibe, President, and Micheal Ukwu, Secretary, commanded the men to stop work to present their petition of grievances.¹⁰²¹ Under the threat of Union fines, 112 of the 212 men dropped their tools and refused to work.¹⁰²² The petition covered two points, General Labor Conditions and Settler Loans and Yam Debits, both of which were ignored by the BCC Scheme staff.¹⁰²³

General Labor Conditions: This is very appalling. Our lot here is crazy hunger and mad starvation. We go in rags with wives and children, and consequently become chronic debtors, because our paltry wages of 1/4d per man per day, does not carry us to anywhere in meeting with the high demands of the present day living. On rainy days, we get ‘half-day’ or one-quarter-day pay, and on public holidays no wages at all. Labourers are sacked from work at random without previous warning or notice or termination. We work eight hours a day, and we have no leave, nor increment of wages, and we are denied war bonus or arrears of Harrigin pay. When we asked for more wages last December 1947, we were threatened with victimization. Our dwelling huts are made of palm leaves, and we have no

¹⁰¹⁶ Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers, NAE, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹⁰¹⁷ Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers, NAE, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹⁰¹⁸ Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers, NAE, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹⁰¹⁹ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰²⁰ Jennifer Hart, “Motor Transportation, Trade Unionism, and the Culture of Work in Colonial Ghana,” *International Review of Social History*, Vol.59, Iss. S22., (December 2014):185-209.

¹⁰²¹ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰²² Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰²³ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

hospital for our health. When we fall sick, we have no pay for the period. Last April 1948 some laborers were kicked and sacked, without any cause and without notice of termination, nor paid in lieu of termination. Tools which got lost in the store since the formation of this scheme were debited against labourers at 2/- per man, 2/6d per head-labourers, and these charges were automatically drawn from our wages on the pay of April. We were compelled by this same method to buy the machetes we work with at 2/6d and 1/3d respectively. All these bad conditions has sapped our lives and made our existence here, woefully miserable.

Settlers Loans and Yam Debits: On October last year 1947, the workers were hastily rushed to sign settlers' agreements, and persuaded to come for loans of money to cultivate and improve the land, build our houses, keep poultry and live as natives, with the understanding to pay back these loans with interest to the planning authority. But when we have entered into the initiative the whole game turned into dribbling. We are given small sums of 2.10/- at very slow intervals, which do not encourage any successful work, and thus we are kept behind time and progress. Again, the planning authority made a command from last year in which were planted yams, rice, cassava, corn or maize, pumpkin, okra, and groundnuts. All these crops were harvested and sold, and the proceeds went into the revenue of the planning authority. But a small quantity of discarded yam seeds left, which was of no significant value in the yam market world, was distributed on sale to the settlers at 2d per 1b. Later to our greatest surprise, we were debited at 11. 18. 1d per 620 lbs, 9. 12/-per 500 lbs approximately. We decry down upon these heavy charges, because they are too exorbitant, as we believe they cover all the cost and transport etc. or the whole crops planted by the planning authority last year. Calculated at 2d. 1. 8d respectively. That we have twice petitioned to this effect to the Assistant Administrative Officer in charge of this scheme, and we have all been denied the justice we crave for.¹⁰²⁴

The establishment of the Kwa Falls Settlers Union took Harding and Newman by surprise, and they alleged they had no idea of its formation.¹⁰²⁵ Ukwu was seen as a troublemaker who had been dismissed from the Railway Office in Enugu "for spreading disaffection."¹⁰²⁶ The Authority felt nothing but contempt for Ukwu, who was seen as the ring leader, but in their words felt "sympathetic satisfaction" for Ibe.¹⁰²⁷ The sentiment was that Ibe, a laborer since 1946 before becoming a settler in 1948, had been led astray by Ukwu. Ibe's appeal, however, was rejected

¹⁰²⁴Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742

¹⁰²⁵ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰²⁶Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰²⁷Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

because “discipline must be re-established following the underhanded efforts of Ukwu.”¹⁰²⁸ It did not take long for Ukwu and Ibe to experience the consequences of organizing.

On 10 June, Ukwu was served with a notice revoking his tenure as a Kwa Falls Settler.¹⁰²⁹ The Authority provided the following basis: “you are not only not a fit person to form part of the settlement but have deliberately attempted to wreck the settlement scheme by spreading disaffection amongst the settlers.”¹⁰³⁰ Ukwu was further threatened with police action for what was labeled his “last misdemeanour.”¹⁰³¹ On 18 June, Ukwu, submitted a Petition of Maltreatment to the Calabar Resident, alleging that he and Ibe faced reprisal for organizing workers.¹⁰³² Powerfully he wrote, “things are not very well with the daily work of the B.C.C. Scheme, at Calabar Mamfe road.”¹⁰³³ By encouraging half of the laborers to support a work stoppage, they positioned themselves as a significant threat to the scheme.¹⁰³⁴ In making an example of Ukwu and Ibe, the Authority hoped to eradicate positive sentiment toward unionization. Ukwu vividly recounted his victimization as follows:

(1) Sacked from work as labourers, (2) seized our farms measuring 4 acres and 2 acres respectively, in which were planted, yams, cassava, corn, coco-yams, pumpkins, okra, egusi, groundnuts, pepper and beans. (3) kicked out of the settlement, ordered not to enter our farms, nor touch any of the crops, nor set foot on any land or lands belonging to the Planning Authority. (4) I, the secretary was confined to my house and ordered not to go beyond certain bounds of about 200 yards from my house. (5) Not to enter any lorry or motor, nor travel by any means to Calabar. (6) Not to be seen sitting or talking or walking together with any labourers. (7) urging one Mr. P.I. Inyang the General Field Overseer and President of my family union to cast me away from the union. (8) Calling me a black monkey and agitator and put me under the close watch or custody of all African staff. (9) threatening to jail me. (10) The A.D.O. Mr. King attempted to jam me with his car on the road on the 9th instant. (11) on the 6th day of my confinement (that is 12/6/48), served with a ‘Notice to Quit,’ and ordered to pay 18/3 ½ d, which they said I owed the Planning Authority. (12) Called me to their office on the 16th instant, and finally warned me that for

¹⁰²⁸ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰²⁹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰³⁰ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰³¹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰³² *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰³³ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰³⁴ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

charity sake and safety of my life, I must quit the locality of Calabar-Mamfe road before the weekend, that the earlier I left the area the better, as my further stay would endanger life.”¹⁰³⁵

On 7 June 1948, Ukwu and Ibe were called before the Authority Office in Aningeje and questioned in the presence of the BCC Scheme staff.¹⁰³⁶ Mr. King, A.D.O and Chairman of the Kwa Falls Planning Authority, asserted that Ukwu’s responses “compounded only irrelevance, prevarication, and flat denial of the statements of witnesses, including Patrick Ibe who had already testified.”¹⁰³⁷ The inquiry was an intense affair, placing pressure on Ukwu, who continually stated he felt that “someone was trying to paint him black.”¹⁰³⁸ The Authority attempted to discredit and deny most of the abuses that Ukwu alleged he experienced because of organizing the laborers.

The petition's purpose was to compel the Calabar Resident to support the laborers in the face of the actions of Harding and the Authority.¹⁰³⁹ Ukwu, who signed his settler agreement, took great offense at being dismissed as a settler without compensation. He made an appeal that became common for many laborers, one that harkened back to their military service:

That as an ex-serviceman as well as a free citizen of Nigeria, and a pursuer of a simple and honest means of livelihood, I also request very sincerely that a copy of this letter which is enclosed here, be forwarded by you to the Chief Commissioner, Eastern Provinces, Enugu.¹⁰⁴⁰

On 4 October 1948, Ukwu learned that the Resident had decided in favor of the BCC Scheme, stating they had “acted in a proper manner.”¹⁰⁴¹ Though in reality the actions of the BCC Scheme were not entirely in line with labor laws. As a result, confidentially the BCC Scheme was

¹⁰³⁵ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰³⁶ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰³⁷ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰³⁸ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰³⁹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

informed they needed to align their practices with proper labor ordinances.¹⁰⁴² Collectively deducting wages for damaged or lost material was not allowed, and they could not dismiss a laborer with one day's notice but needed to provide seven days' notice.¹⁰⁴³ Harding and Newman did not respond; however, further labor complaints show the scheme officials ignored the call for correction.¹⁰⁴⁴

Historian Lisa Lindsey astutely noted that many labor issues in 20th century Nigeria centered on home and the workers place in it.¹⁰⁴⁵ Labor protests on the Calabar-Mamfe Road and among Kwa Falls Settlers were about creating a new home that embodied their masculine identity and experience as veterans and strangers, and the changing interpretations of life as wage earners. Laborers used petitions to advocate on their behalf when they experienced abuse at the hands of scheme officials. In none of the petitions did the men seek to leave the scheme; instead they fought to stay and make the scheme their home.

Bassey Ikpeme's Seized Bicycle

Bassey Ikpeme began working as the BCC Scheme storekeeper on 1 April 1947.¹⁰⁴⁶ In addition to his storekeeping responsibilities, he oversaw building materials and the sale of farm crops to laborers and oil and kernels to firms as well as tracked motor transport accounts.¹⁰⁴⁷ In April 1948, Ikpeme found a shortage of £29: 0: 3 ½ in the store.¹⁰⁴⁸ The events following the discovery of the shortage led Ikpeme to submit a petition to the Nigerian Secretariat, the Chief Secretary to the Government, the Nigeria Ex-Servicemen Union, and the Supreme Council of Ex-

¹⁰⁴² Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁴³ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Lisa Lindsay, "No Need...to Think of Home? Masculinity and Domestic Life on the Nigerian Railway, 1940-61," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 39, No.3 (1998): 439-466.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

Servicemen of Nigeria and the Cameroons on 8 December 1948.¹⁰⁴⁹ The store was made of “palm leaves and bamboo” and lacked a secure door, facts known to the Planning Authority.¹⁰⁵⁰ Because of the theft, Ikpeme paid £2 every month, and at the time of the submission of his petition, £9: 17: 2d was withheld, with an additional £1 from his savings.¹⁰⁵¹ Moreover, his B.S.A. Bicycle, valued at £11: 11: 7d, and acquired through a BCC Scheme Loan, was repossessed. The Authority seized the bicycle over the allegation, Ikpeme had not paid the sum of his bicycle loan.¹⁰⁵² The entire company of “367 labourers, 17 headmen, 5 non-O’s Staff, 34 artisans, 6 field staff overseers, 3-night watchmen, [and] 1 store-keeper paid the sum of £45: 3: 0d.”¹⁰⁵³ Because Ikpeme paid such a large amount and had his bicycle repossessed, he questioned the basis for his harsher treatment compared to the other men.¹⁰⁵⁴

Bicycles were a primary mode of transportation and a status symbol that showed the community the rider was a man of means. In the early 20th-century, bicycle transportation revolutionized the palm oil trade, turning middlemen into significant long-distance traders.¹⁰⁵⁵ A successful businessman who used his bicycle to transport palm oil and people stood to make £22 annually.¹⁰⁵⁶ The bicycle trade was essential in sustaining Eastern Nigeria’s transportation sector during the depression.¹⁰⁵⁷ For settlers and laborers, the bicycle showed their increased access to wealth and western goods. Many African men could not afford a car, but many with means and a

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁵¹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁵² *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁵³ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Anthony I. Nwabughuogu, “The Role of Bicycle Transport in the Economic Development of Eastern Nigeria, 1930-45,” *The Journal of Transport History*, Vol 5, Issue 1 (1984) 91-98.

wage could obtain a bicycle.¹⁰⁵⁸ In seizing Ikpemes' bicycle, Harding trapped him on the settlement and removed an important symbol of his masculinity.¹⁰⁵⁹

Bicycle marketing was a symbol of both modernity and masculinity as can be seen through press clippings and slogans of the time.¹⁰⁶⁰ The Raleigh, all steel bicycle was advertised as "a friend for life,"¹⁰⁶¹ and the BSA slogan, "It pays to ride a BSA," was accompanied by an advertisement that included a professionally dressed man riding off while two women look on in admiration.¹⁰⁶² Advertisements did not portray bicycles as the mode of transportation for the village man, but rather as a symbol of modernity that could attract modern women.¹⁰⁶³

On 16 October 1948, Harding sent a letter to the Calabar Labour Office, which narrated his interaction with Ikpeme, asserting he added relevant points omitted in the original petition:

Mr. Bassey was employed on the scheme as a storekeeper, and after a short time was found guilty at a staff meeting of being, together with another man who was immediately sacked for it, guilty of stealing rice from the store. The African staff wished Mr. Bassey to be sacked on the spot then, but the Development Officer and myself, wrongly as it has since transpired, persuaded the staff that Mr. Ikpeme should be given a second chance. We, therefore, kept him on and have come bitterly to regret it. He was finally sacked by me the other day not only for the probable dishonesty of losing valuable articles from the store but also for utter incompetence. I offered him to the settler's shop, but it was the Managing Committee of the shop, his fellow staff members in the face, who refused to have him. It is true that the staff subsequently pleaded that Mr. Ikpeme should be taken into the field, but this I absolutely refused. Dishonesty and incompetence in the store would mean dishonesty and incompetence in the field too.¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁵⁸Anthony I. Nwabughuogu, "The Role of Bicycle Transport in the Economic Development of Eastern Nigeria, 1930-45," *The Journal of Transport History*, Vol 5, Issue 1 (1984) 91-98.

¹⁰⁵⁹Lisa Lindsay and Stephan F. Miescher, *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).

¹⁰⁶⁰Stephan Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005)

¹⁰⁶¹"Raleigh The All-Steel Bicycle," *Eastern Outlook*, 16 September 1954; "B.S.A." *Eastern Outlook*, 23 September 1954.

¹⁰⁶²"Raleigh The All-Steel Bicycle," *Eastern Outlook*, 16 September 1954; "B.S.A." *Eastern Outlook*, 23 September 1954.

¹⁰⁶³"Raleigh The All-Steel Bicycle," *Eastern Outlook*, 16 September 1954; "B.S.A." *Eastern Outlook*, 23 September 1954.

¹⁰⁶⁴*Mr. B. Ikpeme, Ex-Storekeeper, BCC Scheme: Petition From*, NAE, CSE 1.85.11,155.

Harding admitted that the bamboo building was unsafe but removed blame from himself, stating, “since a new lockup building was built, valuable nails have disappeared.”¹⁰⁶⁵ Throughout his reply to the Labour Officer, Harding made false statements and without proof placed the blame for the theft on Ikpeme. Without providing evidence, Harding alleged that Ikpeme owed an additional £20 and that only through seizing the bicycle, farm and savings in the BCC Thrift Bank, could he be assured to recoup the loss.¹⁰⁶⁶ In his petition, Ikpeme charged that he left the scheme penniless.¹⁰⁶⁷

Harding countered that such an assertion was a lie, writing:

At the staff meeting, we agreed that he should take with him out of his wages enough money to get him to Itu, his hometown (although he was taken into employment here at Aningeje) and, in addition, he received free lorry transport to his house at 5 Chamley Street Calabar. He had, therefore, £2:2:6d in hard cash.¹⁰⁶⁸

Compared to the loss of his bicycle, savings and land, being sent away with only transport were far from enough for Ikpeme to get back on his feet, especially with the rumor that he was a thief. Harding concluded his letter by admitting that he was considering a lawsuit to collect the outstanding funds.¹⁰⁶⁹

The dispute was so clearly unjustified and unfair that the *Nigeria Ex-Servicemen Union* came to the aid of Ikpeme and sent a letter to the Calabar Province Resident, complaining about the actions of Harding.¹⁰⁷⁰ The union was prepared to take legal action and considered his behavior “very high-handed and highly questionable,” but because the BCC Scheme was a government initiative, they first appealed to the Resident.¹⁰⁷¹

¹⁰⁶⁵ Mr. B. Ikpeme, *Ex-Storekeeper, BCC Scheme: Petition From*, NAE, CSE 1.85.11,155.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Mr. B. Ikpeme, *Ex-Storekeeper, BCC Scheme: Petition From*, NAE, CSE 1.85.11,155.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Mr. B. Ikpeme, *Ex-Storekeeper, BCC Scheme: Petition From*, NAE, CSE 1.85.11,155.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Mr. B. Ikpeme, *Ex-Storekeeper, BCC Scheme: Petition From*, NAE, CSE 1.85.11,155.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Mr. B. Ikpeme, *Ex-Storekeeper, BCC Scheme: Petition From*, NAE, CSE 1.85.11,155.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁷¹ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

On 22 October 1948, the General Secretary of the Nigeria Ex-Servicemen Union arrived at Kwa Falls as the lead investigator.¹⁰⁷² During his investigation, he interviewed Harding, who did not hold back his displeasure at being subjected to an interview nor his opinion of ex-servicemen:

[Harding] felt indignant about the decision to improve the pay for ex-servicemen and repeatedly stated, in the presence of ex-servicemen and of Mr. Ema of his office, that he was very much opposed to the decision to improve upon the pay of ex-servicemen whom he said had a contract with His Majesty's the King to sacrifice their lives in exchange for free food, free lodging, free clothes, and money.¹⁰⁷³

Harding did not feel ex-servicemen should be offered increased pay because of their military service, a belief contrary to the initial intention of the BCC Scheme, which sought to use the labor of ex-servicemen to build the road and settle the area.¹⁰⁷⁴ Harding jokingly told E. O. Ema that should the ex-servicemen seek an increase in wage, so should he.¹⁰⁷⁵

The Nigerian Ex-Servicemen Union uncovered that Ikpeme had paid his bicycle loan.¹⁰⁷⁶ Harding argued that while this was true, the bicycle still needed to be taken because of money owed to cover the theft.¹⁰⁷⁷ Under further questioning, a potential culprit was discovered. Harding "admitted that a watchman who watched the unsafe store had been discovered to have been stealing a lot of materials therefrom and selling them."¹⁰⁷⁸ When the watchman learned that he would be forced to pay for the missing funds, he fled from the settlement.¹⁰⁷⁹ Harding, lacking evidence, was under the impression that Ikpeme must have been aware of the theft and held him accountable,

¹⁰⁷²Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁷³Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁷⁸Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

even contemplating legal action.¹⁰⁸⁰ Ikpeme was never made aware of the actions of the night watchmen, nor was this information made available until the union's investigation.¹⁰⁸¹ The union made two recommendations. First, they recommended that Ikpeme not be dismissed but instead be allowed to work in the field with his bicycle returned. Secondly, they recommended that should the issue be unsolvable, Ikpeme should be provided a month's salary.¹⁰⁸²

Ikpeme's ordeal highlights the importance of a union for protecting the rights of laborers and settlers. As a storekeeper, Ikpeme held an esteemed position, but it offered minimal protection from the nefarious actions of management. If it were not for the commitment of the Nigeria Ex-Servicemen Union, Ikpeme would not only have been fired but also would have faced criminal charges, which would have altered his life. The importance of a strong union for the BCC Scheme settlers became apparent because of Ikpeme's ordeal as well as that of many other men who found themselves at the mercy of Harding and others.

BCC Scheme Workers Union

Aningeje, the headquarters of the BCC Scheme, offered none of the amenities a person could expect to find at the headquarters of such an ambitious construction project.¹⁰⁸³ Calabar was 30-miles away, and yet, Aningeje offered "no market, hospital, no good water supply, [and] no post office," but perhaps more significant was the lack of food.¹⁰⁸⁴ Laborers and settlers paid 6d for 4-cups of garri; anything else laborers needed, such as stamps, clothes, or yams, entailed a 30-mile trip to Calabar.¹⁰⁸⁵ Laborers emphasized that a lack of housing forced "workers [to] sleep in the open at night."¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸⁰ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁸¹ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁸² *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE

¹⁰⁸³ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

On 31 March 1949, laborers and settlers, tired of and frustrated by the abuses, maltreatment, and condemnation they faced, formed the BCC Scheme Workers Union, comprised of laborers, carpenters, masons, painters, mechanics, staff and drivers¹⁰⁸⁷. “You are not under a Government Department, nor mercantile, nor native administration, so you must accept whatever conditions of service laid down for you or go,” was Harding’s response when laborers presented their grievances.¹⁰⁸⁸ The BCC Scheme Workers Union demanded medical facilities, proper pay for laborers, ex-servicemen pay, overtime pay, and increases in the bicycle allowance.¹⁰⁸⁹ Men worked 45-hours a week, which far exceeded the 35-hours recommended by the Chadwick Labor Regulations, under which the scheme was supposed to operate.¹⁰⁹⁰ These grievances, laborers argued, were justified and had not been addressed since many of them began working in 1946.¹⁰⁹¹ The following is a complete list of their demands accompanied by an explanation of their experiences:

Feeding-(a) That this is almost none might be denied by the theorists who have not visited here in person to study conditions or who swallow in who another man’s recommendation always made to shield the correct picture from the picture. Garri now sells at 4 cups for 6d here, 1 yam 3/6d, pepper 1/- a cup, palm oil 9d a bottle etc.

Medical Facilities-(b) That medical facilities be extended to the workers here immediately and the old sage that every worker must pay his hospital dues be not repeated again for while on works for the scheme under strenuous condition for 8 hours daily, the body must needs be dislocated and the authority should undertake to cure the sufferer in as much as he gets the illness on the point of duty.

Overtime-(c) That since we started in 1946 and have been working overtime at various times, no overtime pay has ever been paid to us when we asked some were victimized and sacked; Mr. Michael Ukwu being one former secretary got sacked through this.

Allowances-(d) That Bicycle allowance be increased. Cycling on the type of roads and paths we have which eyewitness would confirm as an apology of roads, our allowances are

¹⁰⁸⁷ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/742.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE

¹⁰⁹⁰ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE

¹⁰⁹¹ Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE

rated as low as 5/- per month. Realizing how high prices of bicycle parts are we find it very difficult to affect repairs on our bicycles so that for some days some go 6-8 miles on foot to work for the scheme.

General Labour-(e) We often hear that when a labourer works in any department for 6 months or over, he becomes a daily paid labourer, but here, we have worked for 3 ½ years still on casual basis, even though we do our work better than any labour needing operation in Nigeria, yet we are the least paid.

Ex-Servicemen-(f) That certain condition and credits due to Ex-servicemen here in this scheme have never been given to them on the flimsy excuse that the scheme is not Government, Mercantile nor N.A. depts. To expect that but we know that the Gov't has not the least intention to deny these ex-soldiers their rights.

General-(g) During the visit of His Honour to the scheme, we placed our grievances before him as stated above, and he instead of listening to our complaints and affecting redress he gave us the usual cold language 'did not do anything.' The District Officer-in-charge is partly responsible for the upshot in prices of various commodities in that watches which cost 30/- at Calabar, were sold to the staff here at 40/-. When the District Officer-in-Charge heard of the increase in price of palm oil, he wanted to increase the price of palm oil here, we told him of the condition here, still he persistently increased it from 8/4d to 10/- per time of 35lbs weight instead of the normal 39lbs weight.¹⁰⁹²

The Calabar Resident responded to the grievances with utter contempt, as shown by the statement below:

2. After the most careful consideration of your allegations and the facts of the case, I propose to be both blunt and frank with you. The conditions under which you work are far from being unsatisfactory. Indeed, in some respects, they were superior to conditions obtaining in other parts of the Province.

3. I am of the opinion that your best remedy lies in apologizing for your petition to the Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority, and then cooperate in a constructive manner for your own good and that of the scheme. The only alternative is resignation.¹⁰⁹³

The abrasive comments of the Calabar Resident only exacerbated the tense situation between laborers and the Authority.¹⁰⁹⁴ The BCC Scheme Workers Union did not want to leave the scheme; they wanted to change it so that it lived up to the promises it had made to the laborers in 1946. The

¹⁰⁹² *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE.

¹⁰⁹³ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Petition from Labourers*, CALPROF 7/1/742, NAE

BCC Scheme experienced severe labor unrest following the March 31 petition, which was heightened by a lack of staff in critical positions.¹⁰⁹⁵ Harding, addressing the latter, wrote: “so long as there is not enough staff here, so long will this scheme fail to go forward as it should. Indeed, if proper staff is not forthcoming so as to make it a model and training ground, it is a question whether the whole scheme should not be closed down.”¹⁰⁹⁶ The BCC Schemes intended to give plots to settlers following the third rainy season by either choice or lottery.¹⁰⁹⁷

The BCC Scheme Workers Union responded in mass on 7 April 1949, issuing a vote of “no confidence in Mr. Harding,” which brought work to a halt.¹⁰⁹⁸ The Nigerian Labour Department mediated for both parties.¹⁰⁹⁹ The vote of no confidence was crucial because it masterfully showed the BCC Scheme Workers Union’s ability to organize and advocate for the protection of its members.¹¹⁰⁰ On 17 April 1949, the BCC Scheme Workers Union revoked its vote of no confidence after negotiations promised an increase in wages.¹¹⁰¹

On 31 July 1949, Harding left his post as head of the BCC Scheme, and in his handing over notes to P. L. Wood wrote, “the oil palm is the material for the future prosperity, and everything must give way to that.”¹¹⁰² The emphasis on palm oil production upset many of the laborers who cleared and settled the land. Harding did not like the union and its political alignment and made this sentiment clear in the following statement: “I have gathered from the Eastern Mail that the Union is affiliated not to the sober and well-intentioned T.U.C. [Trade Union Congress] but to

¹⁰⁹⁵ Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹¹⁰⁰ Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹¹⁰¹ Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹¹⁰² *Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

some new National Federation of Unions, which is a Zikist concern.”¹¹⁰³ Colonial officials remained in constant fear of Zikist ideology and its support for rapid national liberation.¹¹⁰⁴

However, colonial officials supported the Trade Union Congress (TUC) because of its support of the colonial agenda. According to Hakeem Tijani, the British TUC took a paternalistic view toward the colonies, providing them with money, advice, and training.¹¹⁰⁵ The colonial government, through the Labour Department, was the largest employer in Nigeria and was afraid of the influx of leftist ideology into the Nigerian workers’ rhetoric.¹¹⁰⁶ Nigeria had a total of 116 unions with 152,000 members. The TUC and the colonial government were committed to efforts that would keep the labor unions away from Zikism or Communism.¹¹⁰⁷

Historian Ehiedu Iweriebor reported that Nnamdi Azikiwe did not create Zikism, but his political and cultural symbolism set the stage for the creation of Zikist ideology.¹¹⁰⁸ Azikiwe returned to Nigeria from Ghana in 1937 and established the *West African Pilot*, the first of a series of papers under Ziks Press, expanding press coverage across Nigeria and Southern Cameroon.¹¹⁰⁹ Azikiwe used Ziks Press to establish himself as an anti-colonial nationalist and became a thorn in the colonial administration’s side.

The Zikist Movement was established by Kolawole Balogun, C. K. Ajuluchukwu, Andrew Agams, Abiodun Aloba and Nduka Eze on 16 February 1946 because they believed that the national consciousness, which Azikiwe had fathered, was under attack, specifically from political

¹¹⁰³ *Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹¹⁰⁴ *Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar*. CALPROF 7/1/200 NAE; Ehiedu E.G. Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria, 1945-1950: The Significance of the Zikist Movement*, (Zaria, Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1996), 104.

¹¹⁰⁵ Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria*, 104

¹¹⁰⁶ Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria*, 105.

¹¹⁰⁷ Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani, *Union Education in Nigeria: Labor, Empire and Decolonization since 1945*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 44-45. The successor to the Zikist Movement was the Freedom Movement established by Samuel Grace Ikoku and Nduka Eze in 1950, but by 1951 it was officially defunct.

¹¹⁰⁸ Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria*, 2-3.

¹¹⁰⁹ Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria*, 2-3.

rivals, who reverted to ethnic baiting which was counterproductive to the anti-colonial struggle.¹¹¹⁰ Zikist called for national liberation and believed that strides toward independence could no longer come from old nationalist methods, which relied on journalistic criticism and support for constitutionalism.¹¹¹¹ The Zikist objective was twofold: First, they intended to protect their new creed of nationalism, which was not only radical but intellectually connected with communism, and second, they intended to broaden their base to other Nigerian youth activists.¹¹¹²

In 1948, the Zikist Movement expanded its strategy beyond civil disobedience, in part due to the arrest of its original leaders and the ascendance of a new executive committee.¹¹¹³ Eastern branch members in Port Harcourt and Onitsha added the use of terrorism as an anti-colonial tool.¹¹¹⁴ In conjunction with the latter, a change in strategy brought the Zikist Movement in alignment with the Nigerian labor movement.¹¹¹⁵ Preeminent radical trade unionists such as Michael Imoudu, F.O. Coker, and Luke Emejulu were Zikist members.¹¹¹⁶ As Historian Hakeem Tijani noted, the colonial government was disturbed at the growing relationship between political parties such as the NCNC, Zikist, and the labor movement.¹¹¹⁷ The greatest fear was that the NCNC and Zikist Movement would use labor organizations to advance an anti-colonial ideology.¹¹¹⁸ Harding feared the alignment of the BCC Scheme Workers Union with the Zikist because of the movement's radicalism and willingness to support violence.¹¹¹⁹ The Zikist Movement was

¹¹¹⁰Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria*, 34-35.

¹¹¹¹ Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria*, 35.

¹¹¹²Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria*, 34-35.

¹¹¹³ Iweriebor, *Radical Politics*, 217-218

¹¹¹⁴Iweriebor, *Radical Politics*, 217-218

¹¹¹⁵ Iweriebor, *Radical Politics*, 217-218

¹¹¹⁶ Iweriebor, *Radical Politics*, 217-218

¹¹¹⁷ Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani, *Britain, Leftist Nationalists and the Transfer of Power in Nigeria, 1945-1965*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 20

¹¹¹⁸ Tijani, Britain, *Leftist Nationalists*, 20.

¹¹¹⁹ Tijani, Britain, *Leftist Nationalists*, 20

officially banned in 1950 after a failed attempt to assassinate Chief Secretary Hugh Foot.¹¹²⁰ Heelas Chukwuma Ugokwe, a veteran and Zikist, was sentenced to life in prison for an attempt to stab Foot on 18 February 1950.¹¹²¹

On 10 October 1949, P. L. Wood, Assistant D.O. of the BCC Scheme and Chairman of the Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority, handed over control to Development Officer A. E. J. Jackson.¹¹²² In Woods' mind, the BCC Scheme still lacked adequate senior staff to be run properly. Although Wood was not in his position long, he completed important work focused on planting. The goal was to plant 30,000 palm seedlings though due to "various reasons only 22,000 were planted" in areas A, B, and C.¹¹²³ Following the palm planting period, labor was reduced to 200, and due to pay disputes, several abandoned the scheme, further reducing the labor force to 110.¹¹²⁴ Wood advised Jackson to recruit more laborers if he intended to move forward with both the scheme and road construction.¹¹²⁵

Woods shed light on the amount of time he spent addressing settlers' queries and demands writing, "the administration of the settlers, of whom there are now 147 takes up a great deal of one's time."¹¹²⁶ Rephrasing a statement made by Harding, which further offers insight into his contempt for settlers, he reemphasized to Jackson: "the main thing learnt from this settlement is that very strict control of settlers is needed, with very little money ever allowed into their hands, and with the closest and hardest supervision of all their labors."¹¹²⁷ This heavy-handed approach for controlling settlers was a catalyst in the formation of the BCC Scheme Workers Union.

¹¹²⁰ Tijani, Britain, *Leftist Nationalists*, 21.

¹¹²¹ Tijani, Britain, *Leftist Nationalists*, 21.

¹¹²² Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹¹²³ *Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹¹²⁴ Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹¹²⁵ *Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹¹²⁶ Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹¹²⁷ *Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

Laborers and settlers were micro-managed and never provided the full amenities promised when they signed their settler agreements.¹¹²⁸ The BCC Scheme Workers Union was vital because it protected the rights of laborers, and in doing so, it remained an adversarial opponent to the Planning Authority.

E. O. Ema's Petition of Maltreatment

In 1952, E. O. Ema filed a Petition of Maltreatment in which he accused N.G. Sinclair, Head of the BCC Scheme, of wrongful termination.¹¹²⁹ Ema had been hired by Harding as a clerk in the BCC Scheme in 1945, a year before formal recruiting began.¹¹³⁰ Ema's duties extended beyond that of a clerk during this formative period, and he took on the additional roles of messenger, storekeeper, and watchmen.¹¹³¹ Ema valued his prominent position in the Scheme, writing passionately that "I have been forced to encounter the misfortune through hatred and in order to bottle me in as they have been determinate to destroy me all along."¹¹³² Ema's destruction began as a consequence of the actions he took during the May 1949 Trouble.

The May 1949 Trouble tarnished Ema's reputation in the community and simultaneously endeared him to Harding, who was then Head of the BCC Scheme.¹¹³³ Recounting the events of 1949 Ema narrated how his position in the community deteriorated:

When the workers became restive and refused peremptorily to accept reconciliation to work normally, I stood firm by Mr. Harding in consequence of which I suffered serious assault. I was called names, tortured and disgraced before the local colour as a traitor. Am fairly certain, His Honour Mr. C. J. Maybe is quite aware of this sorrowful incident and even as I have not been compensated, I bore no grudge nor complained since I stood by Mr. Harding without the hope of receiving special favour but by mere sincerity of purpose

¹¹²⁸Handing Over Notes B.C.C. Scheme: Calabar, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/200.

¹¹²⁹ B.C.C. Scheme Staff, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹³⁰ B.C.C. Scheme Staff, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹³¹ B.C.C. Scheme Staff, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹³²B.C.C. Scheme Staff, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹³³ B.C.C. Scheme Staff, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

and in order to gain the confidence of the authorities concerned and bury any bewildering business that may be existing between the white and black.¹¹³⁴

Under pressure from relatives who felt he betrayed “their trust by failure to join them in the labor dispute,” Ema resolved to resign his position in 1949 until Harding convinced him to remain.¹¹³⁵ In the five years between the May 1949 Trouble and his dismissal, Ema characterized himself as an ideal clerk, one who promptly deposited money into the bank, ensuring that workers received paychecks in a timely fashion.¹¹³⁶ The social capital Ema built was always at odds during his BCC Scheme tenure as he recalled a “shared hatred” that was reserved for him from European staff and African workers.¹¹³⁷

On the night of 4 December 1951, the BCC Scheme office was burglarized.¹¹³⁸ Before the burglary, Ema had taken on the account clerk duties because the clerk was on sick leave.¹¹³⁹ As part of these additional duties between November and December, he collected £20:4:9d.¹¹⁴⁰ Ema put these funds in the office cupboard, which was the policy when Sinclair was out of the office. In addition, on the night of the burglary, Onyah, another clerk, left £10:7:1d in the cupboard. Ema was roused during the night and in the company of six men visited the scene of the break-in. Three months later, he was charged with theft but maintained his innocence.¹¹⁴¹ While he was formally acquitted, Sinclair still dismissed and refused to rehire him. To clear his name and reverse his dismissal, Ema filed a Petition of Maltreatment.¹¹⁴²

¹¹³⁴ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹³⁵ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹³⁶ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹³⁷ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹³⁸ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹³⁹ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁴⁰ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁴¹ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁴² *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

Ema felt that a “shared hatred” from his fellow laborers, and Sinclair exacerbated the situation when he wrote that “my fellow Africans being fully determinate to undo me still shadowed me up and finally succeeded in breaking into our office on the night of 4th December 1951 and stealing therefrom in order to implicate me.”¹¹⁴³ Ema used his Petition of Maltreatment to bring to light a series of verbally abusive statements Sinclair made towards him while they worked together.¹¹⁴⁴ The false accusations occurred in the BCC Office following Sinclair’s return from Calabar for a Board of Enquiry meeting on the theft.¹¹⁴⁵ Ema brought forth the following three incidents to support his claim of verbal abuse:

I. That Mr. Hussey the Provincial Forest Officer, Calabar informed you that I once served in the Forestry Dept. under him and that as I was found to be USELESS, his department could not fix me in, in any job in that department.

II. That Mr. Duckham, D.O., told you that my only qualification to enter into the B.C.C. Scheme establishment was that I am a relative of Ntoe Ika Ika Oqua and added that your predecessors kept me here just for that reason but that you will have to see me out should the government call on you to pay the least fraction of the amount stolen from the scheme.

III. That on enquiring from Mr. Harding about me, he, Mr. Harding informed you that I am a nice man but hadn’t much experience when I first came to the scheme.¹¹⁴⁶

These unfounded claims made by Sinclair destroyed Ema’s character and reputation.¹¹⁴⁷ Ema eloquently responded to them writing:

Having considered that the above allegations which are so embedded in the mind of the officer in charge will doubtless affect both my career and character as well as hamper my progress in this establishment, I have to inform the officer that I may not allow these unfounded allegations to pass on unheeded by and am proposing to

¹¹⁴³ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁴⁴ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁴⁵ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁴⁶ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁴⁷ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

keep the officers named in this letter informed of the situation before deciding on what further steps to take.¹¹⁴⁸

Ema attained legal representation from Barrister Anwan, who admitted he “lost much” in legal fees.¹¹⁴⁹ Ema was frustrated that he did not testify before the verdict. Following his acquittal, Ema received the following correspondence from Sinclair:

2. My personal feelings on this matter all along have been that you had nothing to do with stealing the money and as far as I’m concerned, our relations are again based on the assumption that this incident never occurred.
3. Your absence from the office has, unfortunately, made me realize how little work there is to be done and I have come to the conclusion that I can quite easily run the office myself together with Mr. Onyah and the cashier.
4. I wish to take this opportunity of thanking you for your loyalty to me over the past 12 months and in parting with your services I wish you to know that I shall do anything in my power to help you in getting another job.
5. Your months notice will take effect from Wednesday 9th April 1952 and I shall have a testimonial ready for collection by Friday the 11th April 1952. You need not appear for work during your months notice and I think that the spare time you will thus have will enable you to search for a suitable appointment.¹¹⁵⁰

In the end, Ema was vindicated, and Mayne, Senior Resident Calabar Province, advised that he be re-employed though it is clear, Ema would have been wiser to find employment elsewhere.

On 27 May 1952 C. Stuart relieved Sinclair as Officer in Charge of the BCC Scheme.¹¹⁵¹

In an exchange with the Calabar D.O., Stuart made it clear that he could not fully understand the strong stance Sinclair had chosen to take:

I do not understand Sinclairs attitude in this case at all, I see that on 1st November 1951 he gave Ema an increment of £6 per annum and yet his remarks on the file against that increase are ‘is far below standard expected of a Chief Clerk. Improvement, however, may come with time.’ Hardly the qualification for an increase.¹¹⁵²

¹¹⁴⁸ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁴⁹ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁵⁰ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁵¹ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁵² *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

In the end, the Calabar D.O. managed to find an open position for Ema and asked Stuart to rehire him.¹¹⁵³

Ema's case provides information relevant to the broader quotidian experience of Calabar-Mamfe Road laborers. It is clear laborers did not have a single role or place in the organizational hierarchy, at times causing tension between the laborers and the African Staff. It is equally clear that men who chose not to side with laborers faced reprisal in the immediate aftermath or in the future. Ema's case further shows the arrogance of colonial staff, who mistreated laborers regardless of relevant labor laws. In many ways, the failure of the BCC Scheme can be attributed to the inability of colonial staff to see African men as equals.

The Eastern Regional Development Corporation Takes Control

The Eastern Regional Development Corporation (ERDC) was the investment and financial arm of the Eastern Regional Government that oversaw a number of schemes such as the Bonny Coconut Estate, Calaro Oil Palm Estate, Cashew Nut Industry, Fertilizer Scheme, Ikom Cocoa Estate, Kwa Fall Oil Palm Estate, Obudu Cattle Ranch, Opobo Boatyard, Pioneer Oil Mills Scheme and Santa Coffee Estate.¹¹⁵⁴ The ERDC Board was composed of the most educated and capable men in Eastern Nigeria, all of whom aimed to run the ERDC along the soundest commercial lines.¹¹⁵⁵ In addition, the ERDC oversaw the construction and maintenance of roads as well as being in charge of a loan and grant scheme.¹¹⁵⁶ In 1955, the ERDC approved several expenditures, loans, and grants to Cameroon. Southern Cameroon received £13,500 listed as a road development

¹¹⁵³ *B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Sixth Annual Report of the Eastern Regional Production Development Board 1954-55*, (Port Harcourt: C.M.S. Niger Press, 1955), 6.

¹¹⁵⁵ *Sixth Annual Report of the Eastern Regional Production Development Board 1954-55*, (Port Harcourt: C.M.S. Niger Press, 1955), 6.

¹¹⁵⁶ *Sixth Annual Report of the Eastern Regional Production Development Board 1954-55*, (Port Harcourt: C.M.S. Niger Press, 1955), 6.

expenditure, while the Kumba Federation of Co-Operative Produce Marketing Societies received a £250 grant and the Cameroons Co-Operative Exporters Limited received a £5,666 loan.¹¹⁵⁷

The BCC Scheme did not fail; rather, its initial expectations were one part too high and two parts too expedient.¹¹⁵⁸ In 1948, Harding remarked, “this scheme depends on continuity of direction in the earlier years.”¹¹⁵⁹ Until his tenure with the scheme concluded, Harding advocated for a third officer, preferably a person adept with machinery and engineering.¹¹⁶⁰ Palm production on the scale the BCC Scheme desired was going to take time, and any scheme must be willing to weather challenging economic periods before the project would become profitable. Moreover, those chosen to settle in the area must be well supported and educated on what is needed to become successful. While touring Calabar, Hon. S. W. Ubani-Ukoma, the Regional Minister of Lands and Survey, took the opportunity to visit the BCC Scheme, Kwa Falls Estate, and Kalaro Estate.¹¹⁶¹ Ubani-Ukoma was impressed with the quality of houses the settlers built for themselves but was equally disappointed to learn that few had attempted to cultivate much of their 10 acres.¹¹⁶² His disappointment continued during his tour of the Kalaro Estate when he met with the Mbarakom, the indigenous owners of the land.¹¹⁶³ The Kalaro Estate boasted an impressive seedling nursery, but like the BCC Scheme, it had been underutilized and was slated to be abandoned.¹¹⁶⁴

By July 1953, the BCC Scheme was in a clear state of abeyance, yet this did not deter the recently formed Amalgamated African Workers Union, Calabar-Mamfe Road, from sending its

¹¹⁵⁷*Sixth Annual Report of the Eastern Regional Production Development Board 1954-55*, (Port Harcourt: C.M.S. Niger Press, 1955), 6.

¹¹⁵⁸“B.C.C. Scheme to Be Wound Up,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 11 June 1953

¹¹⁵⁹*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁶⁰*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁶¹*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁶²*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁶³*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

¹¹⁶⁴*B.C.C. Scheme Staff*, NAE, CALPROF 7/1/1558.

preamble with 19 recommendations to the BCC Scheme and ERDC Offices.¹¹⁶⁵ This union, composed of laborers and staff from the Kwa Falls Estate, the BCC Scheme, Massah Swamp Rice, and the Oban Rubber Estate, sought an increase in their cost of living and better organization among skilled and unskilled workers.¹¹⁶⁶ Reflecting on the struggles of the past, the union argued that

For many years the lot of unfortunate ones, mostly the labourers in the Estate/Scheme excluding Oban Rubber Estate which is just on its start have been marked by economic insufficiency continuously living from hand to mouth. We submit with respect that a critical survey of the condition attendant on our less fortunate labourers show that slum, disease, malnutrition have been the blessings of our connection with the establishments.

General labour in these Estates/Schemes are to be seen [as] human beings, who are subject to untold manual indignity, toiling from morning to dust to promote the bulk of the business, while these people receive daily wage of two shilling and three pence to two shilling and sixpence. Not only are the people relegated to the background in [the] scheme of things but have their morals and physical resources been tapped to the core.

We are not unaware that all these things might not have been made known to the board, and it is in the light that we who were the shoes and know where they pinch us, do now recognize the fact of transmitting our ideas and feelings to the Board from the horses' mouth.¹¹⁶⁷

This robust preamble, which found its way to the desks of the ERDC Board of Directors, is a significant statement that highlights a depth of unity and vision among settlers and laborers that had not always been found in previous union iterations.

Udo Otoho became a Kwa Falls settler on 25 September 1949, remaining there through some of its most trying times, which is a testament to his commitment.¹¹⁶⁸ In the end, his

¹¹⁶⁵Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹¹⁶⁶Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹¹⁶⁷Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹¹⁶⁸Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

outstanding loan was more important than his commitment to the Calabar-Mamfe Road Planning Authority. As talks between the ERDC and Calabar-Mamfe Road Planning Authority intensified, Otohoh was notified that he would be allowed to remain only if his “arrears of principal and interest due to the authority [were] paid before 30 June 1955.”¹¹⁶⁹ The principal of the initial loan was £60, and as the scheme transitioned, £25 was owed.¹¹⁷⁰ Following the abandonment of the scheme, Otohoh would become a subtenant of the ERDC.

The following letter undersigned by 17 settlers and supported by many more shows the state of the Calabar-Mamfe Road Planning Authority during its time of transition and the commitment of the settlers to remain and reap the benefits of their labor:

We the undermentioned settlers of the scheme for ourselves and on behalf of the others have the honour most respectfully to inquire of the promise made by the Authority to the settlers.

In the agreement which we signed between the Authority, it was clearly stated that each settler will be given a plot of 5 acres of Palms, that has ever been our confidence and has made most of us not to abscond.

In our meeting with the Officer i/c on the 13th January he told us that the 5 acres of Palms will be given to us at the end of January 1954 and that you will be responsible in the distribution of plots.

As January 1954 has now ended and nothing done, we beg to approach you and hope you will use your good office to look into this complaint of ours and see that the Palms Plots is distributed.

We wish to draw your attention also to that of Camp II settlers which has been divided amongst them without trouble.

We are craving for the palms because it is the reason why most of us agreed upon to be settlers and with this palm plot each settler could be able to repay all his debts to the Authority.

¹¹⁶⁹Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

¹¹⁷⁰Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

The palms are ready for harvesting and we have the hope that you will take an immediate action in order to pacify us.¹¹⁷¹

On 1 October 1955, the ERDC assumed control of the BCC Scheme and the 80 “good” settlers who could keep their 5-acre plots.¹¹⁷² Most of the settlers farmed on the edge of the BCC Scheme’s plantation, but 16 held plots that were “scattered in a somewhat haphazard way, throughout what [was] now the Eastern Region Development Corporation Plantation.”¹¹⁷³ To address this situation, the ERDC offered these 16 men compensation for their land and crops, as well as the option to relocate closer to other settlers.¹¹⁷⁴ From the moment the ERDC took control, it took a friendlier approach towards laborer concerns and complaints, as was seen in its willingness to relocate the scattered settlers. However, this new approach did not curtail complaints, and the absence of a union still negatively impacted the lives of settlers.

The lack of a union disenfranchised both living and deceased laborers. Okon Ukpong Akpan, a native of Ikot Idakha (Ikono) in Ikot Ekpene District, worked at the Kwa Falls Estate before being struck and killed by lightning on 15 November 1955.¹¹⁷⁵ His sudden, unexpected workplace death was devastating for his older brother and the rest of his family, their grief made worse by Kwa Falls Estates’ refusal to compensate the family for his death.¹¹⁷⁶ Uwa submitted a petition to the Labour Office on behalf of his brother to obtain compensation for his death.¹¹⁷⁷

¹¹⁷¹Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239

¹¹⁷²Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹¹⁷³Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹¹⁷⁴Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹¹⁷⁵Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹¹⁷⁶Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

¹¹⁷⁷Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.239.

Uwa, in the company of two others, traveled to the Kwa Falls Estate to speak with Sooth, the manager. At the meeting, Uwa remarked, “At the said first instance of interview no conclusion was arrived at. And in our return, the said manager who seemed to condole with the matter consequently gave me the sum of £3 for our return transport.”¹¹⁷⁸ Uwa and his party left feeling heard, but no decision was reached.

The lack of clarity from the first meeting compelled Uwa to return to the Kwa Falls Estate for a second meeting, which he recounted:

To my greatest surprise the said manager rather dwelt upon making a very irrelevant and funny statement by telling me that he could not easily satisfy my request in that his Dept. had already just recently before the occasion distributed certain amounts of money in increasing salaries of the living workers.¹¹⁷⁹

Uwa demanded £150 as compensation for his brother’s death and the impact the loss of his salary had on the family.¹¹⁸⁰ Uwa wrote about his experience, saying “very strange if he the said manager meant to say that the matter of payment of compensation towards an accidental death of a worker while serving the dept must always be ignored or suppressed when once the salary or salaries of any living worker” is decided.¹¹⁸¹ This ordeal which Uwa experienced highlights the importance of a strong union for settlers.

In March 1956, Sam Mgbodu, Sub-Inspector of Lands, toured the settlements in the company of Mr. Eka, formally of the BCC Office, and an unnamed secretary of the Settlers Union.¹¹⁸² Settlers at Aningeje and Camp III were angry that they had paid their land rents, but the authority had yet to give them “their palms and 5-acre plots.”¹¹⁸³ Mgbodu and Schuit promised

¹¹⁷⁸*Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁷⁹*Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁸⁰*Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁸¹*Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁸²*Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁸³*Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

that all men who had fully paid for their palms and 5-acres of land would get them soon.¹¹⁸⁴ During his tour, Mgbodu discovered illegal settlers; rather than forcibly removing the men and their families, he offered them the opportunity to sign settler agreements, which sixteen men accepted.¹¹⁸⁵ Following the tour, Mgbodu took 150-acres from the ERDC property to give the settlers their long-promised 5-acre palm plots.¹¹⁸⁶

This tour offers insight into the ways men without financial means acquired funds to pay their loans. Nkama, an original settler, took a loan from Michael Chikezie, described as a Calabar Moneylender, to cover the balance of his loan.¹¹⁸⁷ Chikezie used the opportunity of the ERDC taking control and “withdrew his consent to hand over his plot” to a new occupant.¹¹⁸⁸ Nkama used his plot as collateral to secure the loan, and while he paid off the initial loan, he still owed money to Chikezie. Nkama refused to leave, citing that “his own agreement was still valid.”¹¹⁸⁹ This incident occurred within the informal sphere, but it shows another way in which settlers survived on the scheme.

Okon O. Oduonukpah was a member of the Bassey Ekpo Gang on the Kwa Falls Palm Estate.¹¹⁹⁰ Laborers across the estate wanted to form the Kwa Falls Oil Palm Estate Workers Union to protect their interest. To do so, Richard Bassey, Secretary, and Johnson, President, “asked

¹¹⁸⁴ Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

¹¹⁸⁵ Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

¹¹⁸⁶ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230. It was uncovered that none of the settlers at Mile 25 had paid their land rent calculated at 3d per acre per quarter.

¹¹⁸⁷ Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: *Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

¹¹⁸⁸ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

¹¹⁸⁹ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

¹¹⁹⁰ Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations), NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

labourers to give sixpence,” and at a later date, “again to give one shilling each,” and again at a later date five more shillings.¹¹⁹¹ Many laborers began to refuse to donate further because no equipment, such as a typewriter or stationary, had been purchased for the union.¹¹⁹² The Bassey Ekpo Gang itself donated £4.¹¹⁹³ Oduonukpah remarked at the time that “we are against the heavy tax while the union is yet to register.”¹¹⁹⁴ In total, Bassey collected £80 from men across the estate.¹¹⁹⁵ This collection of money for a nonexistent union created a deep division among the settlers to such a degree that a Labor Officer arrived to educate the men on how to establish a union properly.¹¹⁹⁶ The Labour Officer made it clear that it was illegal to collect dues without first legally registering the union.¹¹⁹⁷ In 1956 the ERDC Workers Union Kwa Falls Branch was legally established, and for the first time it had the support of the Kwa Falls Manager, J. W. Schuit, who acknowledged he supported the union only after “some unscrupulous persons had tried to establish a union.”¹¹⁹⁸

The ERDC administered the Kwa Falls Estate using a less authoritarian approach than Mr. Harding, and his successors allowed settlers to focus on building their lives on the estate.¹¹⁹⁹ While fewer issues arose between settlers and the ERDC, disputes among settlers became more pronounced, with the ERDC frequently acting as a mediator.¹²⁰⁰ In 1960, Edet Solomon, Nelson Umo, and Thomas Udo endorsed a petition disparaging the actions of fellow settler Mark

¹¹⁹¹ *Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁹² *Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁹³ *Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁹⁵ *Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁹⁶ *Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁹⁷ *Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁹⁸ *Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹¹⁹⁹ *Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹²⁰⁰ *Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations)*, NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

Nwokocha.¹²⁰¹ Residing in Camp 3 at Mile 32 of the Calabar-Mamfe Road, the settlers complained about Nwokocha's encroachment on Plot Number 2. Nwokocha was not a settler until 1956 when he applied for this plot, which was designated for social and recreational purposes, and petitioners noted, "much money has been expended in laying out our football field for the interest of all settlers."¹²⁰² A church was built on the plot, and plans were in place to build a school for the growing community. Petitioners asked that the ERDC use its power to inform Nwokocha that he was imposing on community land in his attempt to settle.¹²⁰³ This incident is a far cry from the labor strikes that defined the scheme during its formative years. It presents the maturity of the scheme; no longer did men have to live in the "bush" in fear of robbery.¹²⁰⁴ By 1960, men could feel content as Kwa Fall settlers laid physical roots in a school, church, or football field in the same fashion as they had laid the road.

Conclusion

The Calabar-Mamfe Road, BCC Scheme, and Kwa Falls Settlement physically linked Eastern Nigeria with Southern Cameroon, enhancing trade, development, and communication. The Calabar-Mamfe Road had the intended effect of creating new markets and economic opportunities in the Mamfe area. In March 1955, construction on a vital bridge at Mile 62 temporarily closed the road between Calabar and Mamfe. The closure angered the community on the Mamfe side of Mile 62 because it cut off their market from their primary customer base, the Oban Rubber Estate, and Kwa Falls Estate. The community suggested that a lorry remain on their side of the road that could use another route to sell goods in Oban and Kwa Falls. Joseph Iwuagwu of Calabar came to

¹²⁰¹ Kwa Fall Estate (Plantations), NAC, FEMLAB 1.2.3.

¹²⁰² *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

¹²⁰³ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

¹²⁰⁴ *Calabar-Mamfe Road Area Planning Authority: Unsatisfactory and Absconded Settlers*, NAC, CADIST 3.3.230.

their aid and agreed to allow one of his lorries to remain on the Mamfe side of the road. This story is remarkable because it cuts across regional and ethnic divisions that came to define, for a time, the relationship between Southern Cameroon and Eastern Nigeria, showing a region and a people willing and able to help each other in a time of need.¹²⁰⁵

Decommissioned soldiers saw the BCC Scheme as an opportunity to provide for themselves and their families in more significant ways than they previously were able. It represented opportunities for men who were willing to take from the land what the land offered, similar to those first Igbo men who trekked to Southern Cameroon and rebuilt its plantations. The BCC Scheme was an innovative endeavor not only in its approach to palm production but in bringing men together to cultivate high-quality palm oil. Mismanagement of the scheme by short-sighted D.O.s limited its success. However, through unionization, laborers showed their ability to act and speak in a singular, powerful voice. This chapter extended the history of Igbo labor in Southern Cameroon and Eastern Nigeria beyond the confines of CDC and UAC plantations. The BCC Scheme and Kwa Falls Settlement offer insight not only into what was but what could have been had the regions remained united. While many men fled from the settlement, even more, established roots and raised families. Faced with the end of the scheme and its rebirth under the ERDC, committed settlers remained. In this way, these men and their story are just as significant a physical link as the Calabar-Mamfe Road itself.

¹²⁰⁵*Calabar-Oban-Mamfe Road Construction Of*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.237.

CHAPTER 5:

“FOR GREENER PASTURES”: TRADERS, REFUGEES, AND BIAFRANS IN SOUTHERN CAMEROON, 1955-1975

My father went there [Cameroon] because of greener pastures. He went there to search for food for living. My father went to Cameroon in the year 1950 something. He started at the motor park. After the motor park, he went into business, buying and selling foodstuffs. Rice in bags, beans in bags, groundnut in bags, mixed with some little provision stuff. His name was Mr. Christian Obi, my mother's name is Mrs. Christiana Obi. Some of the business he was selling, he was into some of these mixed beans, Cameroonian beans to Nigeria. Some of these items he would pick in Nigeria, some were purchased in Cameroon and sold in Nigeria. He has a store in Tiko Market [located in Tiko, Cameroon]. He has three stores. One was a packing store, the other was a means of selling, the other one was a store my late mother was doing her provisions. I am part and partial of the business.¹²⁰⁶

Christian Obi's life recounted by his son Charles Chigozo encapsulates the Igbo dream of Southern Cameroon as a place of opportunity that allowed those willing to take the risk of remaking themselves into people of note, so that they could retire in their natal villages in old age. Obi left Umunumo Amuzari without a guarantee of success but only the hope that he would find “greener pastures” in Southern Cameroon rich enough to mold himself as he saw fit. Igbo mechanics were well known across Southern Cameroon for their dominance in the motor park industry, and this is where Obi first found himself.¹²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, what cuts across many trader life-stories is the desire to find the situation that best maximizes ability. Obi was apprenticed in the motor park trade by the same gentlemen who took him from Umunumo Amuzari, but he was not obligated to remain once his apprenticeship concluded. Obi found trading in foodstuffs more lucrative, and he was proven correct as he became the proprietor of several stores, an admirable

¹²⁰⁶ Charles Chigzo, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell Jr., 16 September 2018.

¹²⁰⁷ Charles Chigzo, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell Jr., 16 September 2018.

achievement for a man who left his village with only the dream of what could lie ahead.¹²⁰⁸ The Igbo odyssey in Southern Cameroon was not smooth and often encapsulated several trades, marriage, and the establishment of a family that straddled life in both Southern Cameroon and Nigeria.

As traders, craftsmen, mechanics, shoemakers, tailors, transporters, bicycle repairers and fishers, Igbos were a formidable mercantile class in Southern Cameroon. Multinational trading firms such as the United Africa Company and John Holt Ltd. limited themselves primarily to wholesale in Tiko and Victoria, creating space for Igbo traders to monopolize the bulk of internal trade.¹²⁰⁹ Igbo traders extended their dominance because of their ability to operate in two and, at times, three markets. An Igbo trader could purchase wholesale goods from Onitsha to sell in Southern Cameroon and, while in Southern Cameroon, disperse other Igbo traders to sell in smaller local markets. Moreover, the Igbo trader could take both Nigerian and Southern Cameroonian goods to Duala and Yaoundé, where people were willing to pay more for British goods.¹²¹⁰

As a result, of their trade dominance, the Igbo were both simultaneously despised and a fundamental economic necessity. Fear of Igbo domination grew following WWII, fostered by domestic politics, Pan-Cameroonian ideology, and stranger anxiety, ultimately resulting in the 1961 plebiscite that allowed Southern Cameroon to secede from Nigeria and merge with the Republic of Cameroun.¹²¹¹ Fear of the other, especially of the Igbo, was pervasive, and it stretched across Nigeria. Independence was used by minority groups to voice their concerns about Igbo domination and, at times, cast out or attack them. It was under the guise of protecting the Igbo

¹²⁰⁸Charles Chigzo, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell Jr., 16 September 2018.

¹²⁰⁹Edwin Ardener, *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon: Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast, 1500-1970*, (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 169

¹²¹⁰Ardener, *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon*, 169.

¹²¹¹*Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration. Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council*, 1958, 31.

community from assault that Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu declared the Republic of Biafra on 30 May 1967.¹²¹² This chapter investigates the experiences of Igbo traders and families in Southern Cameroon from 1955-1975, including independence, the Biafran War, and life under the Ahidjo regime to explore how the Igbo community transitioned from despised strangers to sympathetic refugees and finally to citizens of Biafra, all in the search for “greener pastures.”

The Amagu-Network in Southern Cameroon

Greg Nfomanda from Bota, Victoria, used the *Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star* to emphasize the importance of road transportation to his community:

Kindly permit space in your journal to let me express my feelings as regards to the news for trade in the Cameroons. Transport and trade are quite intimate neighbors. Unfortunately, transport is fast striking a heavy blow on Cameroonians who possess the urge to trade. The only all-purpose road which stretches from Victoria calling through Kumba, Mamfe to Bamenda is being improved now, but I hesitate to extend thanks to the authorities concerned. Quite a few lorries go up and down this road with unsteady miserable high forces. It would appear this gives an opportunity to transport owners to charge highly in the absence of other means of transportation. The Bamenda man usually produces more food than he can consume, but he must sell the surplus in the local village markets at a price just sufficient to give him salt, oil, and clothing. The Nkom man in Bamenda often carries his kola-nuts on his head across steep hills and angry rivers. There is the spirit of trade, but transport is still hindering him.¹²¹³

Trade and transport were synergetic forces that offered the real possibility of long-term economic and social growth, meaning adequate roads enhanced communities and benefited enterprising traders. The editor of the *Eastern Outlook* posed a critical question to its readers: “Are there no more enterprising businessmen to undertake this important task in the Cameroons? Surely there are many of them.”¹²¹⁴ Such a call was routinely answered by enterprising Igbo traders as evidenced by their immediate and generational actions. A large Nigerian, French, and Southern

¹²¹² Arthur Agwuncha Nwankwo and Samuel Udochukwu Ifejika, *Biafra: The Making of a Nation*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 149

¹²¹³ “Trade and Transport in the Cameroons,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star*, 3 September 1953.

¹²¹⁴ “Trade and Transport in the Cameroons,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star*, 3 September 1953.

Cameroonian population offered the Igbo trader a multilayered market. From Aba and Onitsha, the enterprising Igbo trader acquired commodities demanded by Igbos in Southern Cameroon, while in Tiko and Victoria, they obtained goods required by Cameroonians further into the interior and from Aba, Onitsha, Tiko, and Victoria, the commodities demanded by markets in Duala and Yaoundé. The freedom available to the Igbo traders made them active agents in the economic life of two colonies and across three regions.

Co-operatives, unions, churches, and newspapers viewed Nigeria and Southern Cameroon as a single region, exemplified in the Nigerian & Cameroons Group Carpenters Union, The Post & Telegraphs Engineering Workers Union of Nigeria and the Cameroons, and the *Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star*.¹²¹⁵ In 1955, the Calabar Urban District Council stipulated that all hawkers needed a license to operate legally.¹²¹⁶ The Nigerian & Cameroons Group Carpenters Union disagreed with this characterization of its members, saying they were not hawkers who carried their “goods from place to place or who exhibit the same at any side or corner of the road for selling them,” but were carpenters who remained in their sheds doing their woodwork waiting for customers.¹²¹⁷ The life of a laborer was complex and not confined to a single dimension. Astutely, independent laborers and traders in select occupations formed co-ops to protect their collective interest.¹²¹⁸ Similarly, plantation laborers formed unions, but because they lived on the estate, they rarely formed such organizations that reached across Nigeria and Cameroon.

The relationship between plantation laborers and traders was synergetic because most were strangers. Collectively, the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), Elder & Fyffs, and Pamol

¹²¹⁵ “Trade Dispute,” *West African Pilot*, 20 December 1955.

¹²¹⁶ *Nigeria and Cameroons Group Carpenters Union, Calabar Branch*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.909

¹²¹⁷ *Nigeria and Cameroons Group Carpenters Union, Calabar Branch*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.909

¹²¹⁸ *Nigeria and Cameroons Group Carpenters Union, Calabar Branch*, NAC, CADIST 13.1.909

Limited accounted for the largest concentration of strangers in Southern Cameroon.¹²¹⁹ Across its estates, the CDC recorded 18,000 laborers, with only 688 listed as indigenous to the Victoria Division.¹²²⁰ More specifically, data indicated that 5,473 were Nigerians while 1,000 were French Cameroonians, with the remainder comprised of men from Southern Cameroon's other divisions.¹²²¹ In the Victoria Division, "there [were] more than three immigrants to every native-born person."¹²²² Comparatively, the Bamenda Division had 1,710-Hausa and 538-Igbo, while 287 were listed as other Nigerians.¹²²³ Thus, plantations were dependent on strangers for both sustainability and growth.

Igbo traders operated in a commercial space rooted first in kinships established in both maternal and paternal communities.¹²²⁴ Familial relationships meant that access to wealth was tied to kinship, lineage, and friendship with the intent that it was a reciprocal exchange. In turn, this fostered strong community identities that became key in maintaining generational economic prosperity.

Kinship was central to migration not only among the Igbo, but it also formed a web across West Africa. Kinship benefited migrants and their wider communities because they were able to leverage these interrelationships. Historian Polly Hill explored the latter through the rural-based capitalism of entrepreneurial pre-colonial Katsina tobacco traders who hoarded their crop until the

¹²¹⁹ *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration. Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council 1958*, 68.

¹²²⁰ *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration. Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council 1958*, 68.

¹²²¹ *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration. Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council 1958*, 68.

¹²²² *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration. Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council 1958*, 92.

¹²²³ *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration. Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council 1958*, 68.

¹²²⁴ Tom Forrest, *The Advance of African Capital: The Growth of Nigerian Private Enterprise*, (London: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 19.

price rose, after which time they traveled to Niger and traded tobacco for cattle. Katsina traders fed the cattle until they reached peak weight and then sold them in the south for kola.¹²²⁵ Colonialism allowed for pre-established trading networks and apprenticeships to extend beyond pre-colonial boundaries.¹²²⁶ Within the colonial structure, kinship and the wage economy shifted the power dynamics in villages and cities. Historian Sara Berry noted that among the Yoruba, cocoa farming first challenged and then transformed social life, resulting in a situation which, according to one of her oral history collaborators, “now fathers work for their sons.”¹²²⁷ Yoruba men and women accumulated wealth from cocoa production, and this had a direct impact on both the careers of their children and the broader regional economy. Chapter II investigated a similar situation by highlighting the dynamics involved when Igbo men first began migrating outside of Igboland, a migration that had a direct impact on traditional forms of farm labor of both older and younger men.

Historian Peter Kilby asserted that the village and its culture were an embedded source for social and moral values that sustained migrants in the city.¹²²⁸ Extended to include Igbo migrants in Southern Cameroon, communal responsibility and traditional village status better equipped them to maneuver in their new modern environment as wage earners. Kilby argued that such an interaction prevented migrants from becoming permanent settlers.¹²²⁹ Further extending this thought, Historian, Josef Gugler asserted that this is found most readily in university-educated civil

¹²²⁵Polly Hill, *Studies in Rural Capitalism in West Africa*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 141-145.

¹²²⁶ Hill, *Studies in Rural Capitalism*, 146.

¹²²⁷Sara Berry, *Fathers Work for Their Sons: Accumulation, Mobility, and Class Formation in an Extended Yoruba Community*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 79-80

¹²²⁸Peter Kilby, *Industrialization in an Open Economy: Nigeria 1945-1966*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1969), 207-208

¹²²⁹ Kilby, *Industrialization in an Open Economy*, 208.

servants in Enugu.¹²³⁰ Focusing on the urban elite, he asserted that they cared about their village's opinion of them; however, success in the city was viewed the same as success achieved through traditional means.¹²³¹ The educated elite attained prestige through traditional and modern means, displaying their wealth through the building of homes, buying cars, contributing to village improvements, and sponsoring others.¹²³² While Gugler limited his analysis to educated Easterners, it applies equally to Igbo migrants. However, a significant distinction is that many migrants lacked access to elite education and attained their status through hard work, determination, and commercial acumen. Not only is this exhibited through the Amagu Network, but it is also embedded in every Igbo, Ibibio, and Hausa narrative. The ability of Igbos to create a far-reaching trading network and establish commercial stations made them both a formidable force and an easy target.

The best opportunity for wealth accumulation was not in agriculture but a trade or civil service. Enterprising young men chose to invest the money they made from agriculture into establishing a small business before investing heavily in land back home, primarily because investing in a trade required less capital and would become profitable sooner.¹²³³ In comparison, because the population was so dense, the price of land and construction in eastern Nigeria was much higher than that in Southern Cameroon.¹²³⁴

Igbos were an essential element to mercantile life in Southern Cameroon, a situation which generated deep social animosity. Large trading firms empowered intermediaries because they did

¹²³⁰ Josef Gugler, "Life in a Duel System: Eastern Nigerians in Town, 1961," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 11, Cahier 43 (1971):400-421.

¹²³¹ Josef Gugler, "Life in a Duel System: Eastern Nigerians in Town, 1961," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 11, Cahier 43 (1971):400-421.

¹²³² Josef Gugler, "Life in a Duel System: Eastern Nigerians in Town, 1961," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 11, Cahier 43 (1971):400-421.

¹²³³ Forrest, *The Advance of African Capital*, 20.

¹²³⁴ Forrest, *The Advance of African Capital*, 20.

not wish to deal with smaller markets.¹²³⁵ These enterprising middlemen acted as distributors who sold commercial goods to smaller traders who then sold the product in even smaller markets.¹²³⁶ Enhanced road networks not only increased village trade but the reach of these middlemen.¹²³⁷ Traders from Mamfe and Kumba used the roads to extend the reach of their internal trade, bringing foodstuffs such as rice, pepper, and groundnuts to broader markets.¹²³⁸ Middlemen of more significant means used lorries to reach larger centers and, thus, carried more goods from the interior to firms in Tiko and Victoria.¹²³⁹ The high cost of foodstuffs in French Cameroon enhanced the presence of Nigerian traders from Southern Cameroon in cities such as Duala and Yaoundé.¹²⁴⁰ While Nfomanda called upon Cameroonians to increase large-scale trading, regionally, this was dominated by Igbo traders, who were more adept at trading between villages because of their access to lorries and their extended kinship trading networks.

In Nigeria and Cameroon from 1955 to 1960, the fishing industry experienced a growth that contributed to an increase in stranger populations.¹²⁴¹ For example in Southern Cameroon, the Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council reported 4,000 Efiks, primarily seasonal fishermen, who lived in the Bakolle Council Area, Victoria Division, with the largest settlement of 2,000 at Ubanikang.¹²⁴² Rio del Rey, Tumbe, Ubanikang, and Bakassi were all settled and maintained by Efiks, Ibibios, Ijaws, and Igbos as far back as the 15th century.¹²⁴³ Permanent settlement in the

¹²³⁵ *Report to the United Nations*, (1958), 114-115.

¹²³⁶ *Report to the United Nations*, (1958), 114-115.

¹²³⁷ *Report to the United Nations*, (1958), 114-115.

¹²³⁸ *Report to the United Nations*, (1958), 114-115.

¹²³⁹ *Report to the United Nations*, (1958), 114-115.

¹²⁴⁰ *Report to the United Nations*, (1958), 114-115.

¹²⁴¹ *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration, Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council*, (1958), 68

¹²⁴² *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration, Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council*, (1958), 68

¹²⁴³ *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration, Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council*, (1958), 68

fishing estuaries became important because of the growth of the fishing industry coupled with advancements in technology and boats.¹²⁴⁴ Lewis Ubochi from Amagu in Amia Akakbo was brought to Tiko by his oldest brother Mark. His son, Minister Godwin Ubochi, born in Tiko, reflected on the role Mark played in bringing his father to this settlement:

My uncle, Mr. Mark, was the first guy that traveled to Cameroon. So, by nature anywhere an Igbo man travel to, if that place is very good for him, he will bring his kinsmen. In particular his immediate brother. So, when he got there he started working in the plantation and the place was favorable. So, he has to bring along my father.¹²⁴⁵

In Tiko, the Ubochi brothers worked on CDC rubber and plantain plantations.¹²⁴⁶ As the eldest brother, Mark was obligated to bring his siblings with him if he found the place suitable, and he was equally required to return home if his parents became ill.¹²⁴⁷ These obligations frame the pressure placed upon men, in particular elder brothers, to find a fertile place as well as the pressure on them to establish themselves as quickly as possible as they could be called back home at any time. Mark found Southern Cameroon so favorable that he married a Cameroonian woman and fathered three daughters.¹²⁴⁸ Lewis Ubochi left the CDC for the fishing trade, establishing himself well enough that he was able to return to Nigeria and marry Helen Ubochi before they both relocated to Tumbe, an island an hour away from Tiko by paddle boat.¹²⁴⁹

¹²⁴⁴ *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration, Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council*, (1958), 68

¹²⁴⁵ *Oral Interview: Minister Godwin Ubochi*, James K. Blackwell Jr, ICT Park, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, 6 August 2018.

¹²⁴⁶ *Oral Interview: Minister Godwin Ubochi*, James K. Blackwell Jr, ICT Park, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, 6 August 2018.

¹²⁴⁷ *Oral Interview: Minister Godwin Ubochi*, James K. Blackwell Jr, ICT Park, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, 6 August 2018.

¹²⁴⁸ *Oral Interview: Minister Godwin Ubochi*, James K. Blackwell Jr, ICT Park, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, 6 August 2018.

¹²⁴⁹ *Oral Interview: Minister Godwin Ubochi*, James K. Blackwell Jr, ICT Park, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, 6 August 2018.

Lewis and Helen Ubochi were the first from Amagu to arrive in Tumbe but not the last as many from Amagu followed them into the fishing trade. Tumbe was settled primarily by Igbos and Ijaws.¹²⁵⁰ The latter were highly migratory, only settling in Tumbe for one or two months before leaving for the next fishing estuary.¹²⁵¹ Igbos contracted with the Ijaw to catch fish, which they sold to the former who then dried and sold them in the Tiko market.¹²⁵² According to Helen, “we used canoes by hand, and we go to Tiko, and after selling, we will buy things we need and carry them back to Tumbe.”¹²⁵³ The Ubochi family was successful enough to build the first block home in Tumbe, which positioned them as a significant force in the Tumbe fishing trade and marked their intention of permanent residency.¹²⁵⁴

In Tiko, Helen sold fish to other Igbo traders, many from Amagu, because she believed they were more commercially adept than Southern Cameroonians. As she recalled, “the Cameroonian didn’t buy our fishes [sic] [because] they are lazy and dull, they are in their country and Nigerians are here to look for money, and they are citizens, and they stay and enjoy life in bars and drink.”¹²⁵⁵ As a mercantile class, Igbos were not in Southern Cameroon to experience the region’s beauty; instead, they were there solely for commercial purposes, placing them in competition with other Igbos, Nigerians, and Cameroonians. Igbos were more concerned with trade than enjoying the social life in Cameroon, and this explains why many viewed the

¹²⁵⁰ Helen Ubochi, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁵¹ Helen Ubochi, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁵² Helen Ubochi, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁵³ Helen Ubochi, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁵⁴ Helen Ubochi, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁵⁵ Helen Ubochi, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

Cameroonians as lazy. However, this sentiment was not universal though it was exploited by Cameroonian politicians to present the Igbo as imperialistic. Helen became successful enough in Tumbe to buy a motorized boat, which she rented to Ijaw fishermen. This rental arrangement enabled her to “buy [fish] from them and dry it and then sell it” in Tiko.¹²⁵⁶

The sea offered a series of dangers, both natural and human-made. As Helen noted, “the Ijaw people stole my canoes and ran away when they used my canoes.”¹²⁵⁷ She never found her canoes because of the migratory nature of the Ijaw, labeled by many of my collaborators as the Hausa of the water. While the theft of the canoes were a significant loss, Helen remained in the fishing trade. Reflecting on the dangers of the sea, Helen remarked, “the ocean wave can be high at times, you will see boats capsizing, and people will die, and you will see their corpse, but thank God I survived.”¹²⁵⁸ Helen admitted she went to Tumbe “for greener pastures,” which she reaped from the fishing trade, allowing her to raise and educate her family in Cameroon and Nigeria. The odyssey of the Ubochi family highlights the impact a single migrant can have on a community.

Christian Anozie, whose paternal home is Amagu, was born in Tiko Hospital in 1976.¹²⁵⁹ His father lived in Southern Cameroon for 40 years, returning to Nigeria only to marry his mother. Christian recalled the following about his father’s life in Cameroon: “my father was a fish seller. When people from inside the water bring fish, you go to Tumbe, you buy directly from fishermen and sell in Tiko.”¹²⁶⁰ The journey of the Igbo traders into Southern Cameroon was a continuous

¹²⁵⁶Helen Ubochi, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁵⁷Helen Ubochi, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁵⁸Helen Ubochi, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁵⁹Christian Anozie, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁶⁰Christian Anozie, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

search for “greener pastures.” The demarcation in that journey came with time; for some Southern Cameroon was the first stop, while for others, it was the continuation of a trader’s odyssey. About his father’s journey, Christian recalled: “he was a fisherman first in Okrika, River State. From there, he traveled to Cameroon, even there he was a fisherman. Then after some time, he left the fisherman job and entered the business of buying and selling fish.”¹²⁶¹ Christian’s father enjoyed Tiko as evidenced by his 40-year residence. He was welcomed in Tiko as a stranger, enabling him to become a pass collector and later Chairman of the Imo State and Abia Union at a time when the states were one.¹²⁶² The Anozie family did not leave Tiko by choice but by obligation. As the eldest son, it was Christian’s father’s obligation to return home to take care of his family. Tiko offered them greener pastures and placed them in a higher position of power in their native homeland.

The Rio del Rey remained a vital fishing area as well as an intermediate point in the trafficking of contraband.¹²⁶³ Recognizing the increased flow of illicit goods from the Rio del Rey, the colonial government established the Wastergaurd Service.¹²⁶⁴ In 1953, the *Chaser* made a significant seizure when it stopped a canoe with 1,500 bottles of liquor valued at £600.¹²⁶⁵ The potential loss in duty fees was estimated at £1000.¹²⁶⁶ Smuggling offered both great highs and life-altering lows. A smuggler was not only defined as someone who traded illicit goods, but more broadly was someone who traded in any goods considered illegal in the British colony.¹²⁶⁷ Festus,

¹²⁶¹Christian Anozie, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁶² Christian Anozie, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹²⁶³ “1,500 Bottles of Spirits seized at Calabar,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star*, 5 November 1953

¹²⁶⁴ “1,500 Bottles of Spirits seized at Calabar,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star*, 5 November 1953

¹²⁶⁵ “1,500 Bottles of Spirits seized at Calabar,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star*, 5 November 1953

¹²⁶⁶ “1,500 Bottles of Spirits seized at Calabar,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star*, 5 November 1953.

¹²⁶⁷ “1,500 Bottles of Spirits seized at Calabar,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star*, 5 November 1953

born in Tiko in 1953, was the son of a trader, smuggler, and vegetable seller.¹²⁶⁸ Reflecting on the actions of his father, Festus acknowledged that “my father was a trader, a smuggler, he used to go in the Eastern part of the country of Cameroon to buy drinks. And then come and sell, when Nigeria was still with Southern Cameroon. So, my father used to go to the East part of Cameroon, you know then you had to smuggle yourself, haul drink and beer and sell in Tiko Town.”¹²⁶⁹ Smugglers navigated the informal market with a commercial acumen heightened by the added stress. An Igbo smuggler could become very successful selling Nigerian and Cameroonian goods in Francophone Cameroon before returning with goods for the Nigerian market as evidenced by the duty fees Nigerian customs received legally.¹²⁷⁰

In 1958, the Visiting Mission of the United Nations commented that the urban cities of Kumba, Tombel, and Mbonge were “peopled chiefly by immigrant Africans applying their energy in business acumen to petty trading.”¹²⁷¹ Maxwell Oke Ejiofor arrived in Cameroon in 1959, and only returned to Nigeria in 2013 because of age, and like so many others from Amagu, Ejiofor followed the Ubochi’s path and entered the fishing trade. Ejiofor recounted the following about his fishing trade experience: “The place where I go, my own station was Bamenda. I go [to] Duala. I go [to] Kumba, Limbe, Bamoso, Ndian Division. I go many places. I make market, I sell fish. I was a fish seller, I carry go.”¹²⁷² The Amagu network became an integral part of the fish trade in Tiko. Young people leaving Amagu could feel confident that they were part of a trading network

¹²⁶⁸ Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018

¹²⁶⁹ Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

¹²⁷⁰ Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018

¹²⁷¹ *Information on the Cameroons Under Kingdom Administration*. Prepared for, The Visiting Mission of the Trusteeship Council, (1958), 77.

¹²⁷² Maxwell Oke Ejiofor, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

that could take them anywhere they wished. Such networks angered Cameroonians who competed with Igbo traders because the latter were far more comfortable trading with their kinsmen.¹²⁷³

This fear of the economic dominance of the Igbo was compounded by the perception that they also included a criminal element. Okon Utioh, an Ibibio, lived in Likomba and worked for Elders & Fyffes as a railway laborer.¹²⁷⁴ In August of 1953, Utioh was robbed of the £22 worth of postal orders addressed to the Monday Utio Ewoto Mbioto Postal Agency. Police quickly arrested Udoh Okon and David Effiong, both Ibibio, for the theft.¹²⁷⁵ In November of 1953, Francis Edet, an Ibibio who lived in Tiko, was charged with both breaking into the R.C.M. school and escaping from police custody.¹²⁷⁶ Lucas Nwatiagbo, an R.C.M. teacher, caught Edet in the act of breaking into the school. On being questioned, Edet stated that “he was a smuggler from French Cameroon and was only resting in the school.”¹²⁷⁷ Further investigation revealed that he had in his possession tools appropriate for committing robberies, specifically “an unusually large pair of steel scissors for breaking doors and cupboards.”¹²⁷⁸ In the Buea Magistrate Court, Edet was sentenced to six years in jail.¹²⁷⁹

In the hands of Dr. E. M. L. Endeley and later John Ngu Foncha, the actions of criminal strangers were painted with a broad brush over the entire Ibibio and Igbo community. As political fodder, the actions of these men exacerbated the fear of Igbo domination. Thus, Southern Cameroonians were being dominated economically and criminally by dubious stranger elements.

¹²⁷³ Maxwell Oke Ejiofor, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo, Owerri, Imo State*, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

¹²⁷⁴ “Robbed of Postal Orders,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 27 August 1953

¹²⁷⁵ “Robbed of Postal Orders,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 27 August 1953.

¹²⁷⁶ “Robbed of Postal Orders,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 27 August 1953

¹²⁷⁷ “6 Years for Breaking into Tiko School,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 26 November 1953.

¹²⁷⁸ “6 Years for Breaking into Tiko School,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 26 November 1953.

¹²⁷⁹ “6 Years for Breaking into Tiko School,” *Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, 26 November 1953.

The exaggeration of harmful elements from stranger communities was used as a political wedge to create support for secession.

Fear of Igbo Domination and the 1961 Plebiscite

As independence neared, ethnic tension and xenophobia cast an ever-larger shadow over Nigeria and Southern Cameroon.¹²⁸⁰ Minorities in the North, South-West, and East feared Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo political and economic domination.¹²⁸¹ Fears grew to such a heightened state that Alan Lennox-Boyd, Secretary of State of the Colony, commissioned an inquiry to determine the best course of action to ease tensions.¹²⁸² In 1957, there were five million Igbos in Eastern Nigeria.¹²⁸³ In previous chapters, this study analyzed how such tensions pushed Igbos outside the confines of Igboland into Southern Cameroon and Fernando Po. The same pressure pushed Igbos into North and South-West Nigeria, where they were equally despised for their economic, intellectual and social aggressiveness. Foncha, the leader of the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), was not alone when he advocated secession from Nigeria to break away from Igbo domination.¹²⁸⁴ Eastern minorities felt increasingly disenfranchised going so far as to allege that Nnamdi Azikiwe and the NCNC were imposing regional autocratic rule.¹²⁸⁵ Eastern Nigerian minorities proposed the creation of four states along political and ethnic lines to the Lennox-Boyd Commission: The Ogoja State, Cross River State, Rivers State, and the most ambitious, the COR

¹²⁸⁰ *Nigeria Colonial Office Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and The Means of Allaying Them*, (1957-58), 14.

¹²⁸¹ *Nigeria Colonial Office Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and The Means of Allaying Them*, (1957-58), 14.

¹²⁸² *Nigeria Colonial Office Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and The Means of Allaying Them*, (1957-58), 14.

¹²⁸³ *Nigeria Colonial Office Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and The Means of Allaying Them*, (1957-58), 14.

¹²⁸⁴ *Nigeria Colonial Office Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and The Means of Allaying Them*, (1957-58), 14.

¹²⁸⁵ *Nigeria Colonial Office Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and The Means of Allaying Them*, (1957-58), 14.

State, a combination of the Calabar, Ogoja, and Rivers, that intentionally excluded Abakaliki and Afikpo, both densely populated by Igbos.¹²⁸⁶ The fear of minorities across Nigeria and in the commission contextualizes the sentiments of Southern Cameroonian politicians who alleged a conspiracy of Igbo domination. These sentiments felt across Nigeria not only impacted the time just preceding independence but were at the root of the Biafran War.¹²⁸⁷

An influx of politically orientated French Cameroonians arrived in Southern Cameroon in the 1950s and immediately began advocating for reunification.¹²⁸⁸ The Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), established in 1948, advocated for the unification of Cameroon under its former German era boundaries, the abolishment of the French assimilation and the termination of the trusteeship.¹²⁸⁹ The UPC, which was Marxist, anti-colonial and pan-African, ultimately took up arms against both France and the Cameroun Republic.¹²⁹⁰ UPC leaders were successful in translating party ideology to the layperson, which positioned them as the greatest threat to French colonial authority. In denouncing cumbersome trade barriers, the UPC appealed to many residing between both Francophone and Anglophone Cameroon.¹²⁹¹ The UPC was the antithesis of Cameroun's other political parties which were largely elitist and manipulated by France.¹²⁹² The UPC's grassroots agenda and critiques of both indigenous titles and the Catholic Church did not endear them to the established power structure.¹²⁹³ Historian, Joseph Takougang argued that

¹²⁸⁶Nigeria Colonial Office Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and The Means of Allaying Them, (1957-58), 14.

¹²⁸⁷ Nigeria Colonial Office Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and The Means of Allaying Them, (1957-58), 14.

¹²⁸⁸ Atem George, *How Unified is the Republic of Cameroon? The Unification of the Institutions of the Republic of Cameroon since 1961*, (Cameroon: Anucam, 2012), 6.

¹²⁸⁹ George, *How Unified is the Republic of Cameroon?*, 6.

¹²⁹⁰ George, *How Unified is the Republic of Cameroon?*, 6.

¹²⁹¹ Meredith Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws, State of Violence: Nationalism, Grassfields Tradition, and State Building in Cameroon*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), 99

¹²⁹² Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws*, 99.

¹²⁹³ Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws*, 100.

Southern Cameroonian politicians embraced unification not because they believed in it but because doing so allowed them to connect with French Cameroonians who would soon attain the right to vote.¹²⁹⁴ The UPC spearheaded the promotion of reunification.¹²⁹⁵ Unlike Southern Cameroonian politicians who duplicitously embraced the idea, to the UPC, it was the alpha and omega.¹²⁹⁶

In 1955, the UPC was outlawed and subsequently relocated its headquarters across the Mungo River to Kumba.¹²⁹⁷ While not numerically intimidating, the UPC remained a formidable intellectual and political force.¹²⁹⁸ In 1957, it was banned in Southern Cameroon though its agenda was summarily adopted by the One Kamerun Party (O.K.), founded by the former UPC member Ndeh Ntumazah.¹²⁹⁹ While the call for the unification of the Cameroons was fueled by fear of Igbo domination, Southern Cameroon's political agenda was influenced by external forces whose agendas ran counter to the trajectory of the people because it denied them the right to choose their path.¹³⁰⁰ Understanding the rhetoric and tone of the multiple political actors is vital in comprehending and contextualizing how fear of Igbo domination propelled the secession of Southern Cameroon. While the fear of Igbo domination was real in the minds of some, for most, it was a political football used to advance their agendas.

The *Pilot* took the position that J. S. Dudding, Deputy Commissioner of Southern Cameroon, set a dangerous precedent when he admitted his intention to give priority to Southern

¹²⁹⁴Joseph Takougang, "The Union des population du Cameroun and its Southern Cameroons Connection," *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* (1996):7-24.

¹²⁹⁵Joseph Takougang, "The Union des population du Cameroun and its Southern Cameroons Connection," *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* (1996):7-24.

¹²⁹⁶Joseph Takougang, "The Union des population du Cameroun and its Southern Cameroons Connection," *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* (1996):7-24.

¹²⁹⁷Joseph Takougang, "The Union des population du Cameroun and its Southern Cameroons Connection," *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* (1996):7-24.

¹²⁹⁸Joseph Takougang, "The Union des population du Cameroun and its Southern Cameroons Connection," *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* (1996):7-24

¹²⁹⁹George, *How Unified is the Republic of Cameroon*, 13; *Report to the United Nations*, (1958).

¹³⁰⁰George, *How Unified is the Republic of Cameroon*, 13

Cameroonians when he re-engaged “retrenched workers.”¹³⁰¹ The *Pilot* understood such a stance disenfranchised the status of Nigerian workers in Southern Cameroon as seen in the following statement:

But after the cheers shall have died down, we have no doubt that he will realize that he has given expression to a very dangerous sentiment. Many politicians in the Southern Cameroons have for some time now, been thinking that if Nigerians are removed from the territory all will suddenly be well. But we know enough to know that they are mistaken. To make it impossible for Nigerians to thrive in the Southern Cameroons is to doom eternally the economic well-being and entire progress of the territory. How very unfortunate that Mr. Dudding is now helping the politicians along in their illusion.

Nigerians in the Southern Cameroons are the very goose that are laying the golden eggs from which the territory draws its impulses. Only a short-sighted man will plan the killing of such goose. And the government of the Southern Cameroons, which is by no means of proven competence, will be making a rod for its own back by discriminating against Nigerians in the territory. The unfortunate thing about it is that Mr. Dudding won't be there to reap the whirlwind which he is busy sowing.

It is all very well to dream dreams and see visions. But it is not common sense to have dreams and visions that are a far cry from reality. The Southern Cameroons cannot do without the co-operation of its so-called strangers. Mr. Dudding is guilty of giving expression to a very dangerous nonsense when, to please some unimaginative politicians, he announced the discriminatory policy that the Government of the Southern Cameroons will pursue against Nigerians in the territory.¹³⁰²

Strangers were threatened not by the community at large but by predatory politicians and businessmen who preferred to use them as a scapegoat rather than accurately address real issues. Among certain politicians, the sentiment was that strangers should work neither as Civil Servants nor for the CDC.¹³⁰³ The KDNP wanted to Cameroonize the Civil Service and all other government-funded positions.¹³⁰⁴ However, plantations could not properly function without

¹³⁰¹“Dangerous Precedent,” *West African Pilot*, 19 August 1957.

¹³⁰²“Dangerous Precedent,” *West African Pilot*, 19 August 1957.

¹³⁰³ “Dangerous Precedent,” *West African Pilot*, 19 August 1957.

¹³⁰⁴ “Dangerous Precedent,” *West African Pilot*, 19 August 1957.

migrant labor. In agreeing to engage these forces, Dudding essentially stated that he supported the broad sweeping discrimination of Igbos in Southern Cameroon.¹³⁰⁵

As Dudding appeared to give in to political pressure, Premier Endeley showed a hint of a change from his hardline political days. Politicians arrived at the 1958 Constitutional Conference with regional elections approaching. As the conference ended, Premier Endeley delivered an address showing the extensive change he had undergone since assuming power:

In 1953 when I first came here to represent Southern Cameroon, I remember I made one statement, and that statement now rings back in my memory. I said it was by accident that the Cameroons became attached to Nigeria. During the past five years, I have realized that the accident has brought greater good to the Southern Cameroons than the forty years we existed as a mandated territory under Britain; this is because of the rapid progress that has been achieved in Nigeria in the last twenty years. We have indeed been able to move comparatively much faster than the regions of Nigeria themselves. You have now given us a date of 1st October 1960 when Her Majesty's Government would be in a position to declare independence for Nigeria. I have been much worried since I signed that declaration last year, wondering whether 2nd April was a suitable date for independence. A lot of things I was sure would have to be done before 2nd April. One was the battle for the Federal elections, I felt that people will emerge from their elections feeling very embittered. I, therefore, take this opportunity to appeal again to my elder brothers, the Nigerian leaders of political opinion, that it is not enough to make grand speeches about this 'challenge' that has been thrown at us: a great deal depends on the goodwill that will exist between the Premiers of the Regions and the Prime Minister during the next eighteen months. Unless there is a measure of that spirit of give and take and closer consultations and friendliness throughout, our dreams of independence for Nigeria will come to naught. I think there will be many numerous occasions when it will be essential for us to pull closer and plan for the future of the country. With the granting of independence on 1st October 1960, we will just have cleared the first hurdle of the problems that will confront Nigeria, and much will depend on our attitudes towards one another and the people whom we represent and for whom we work. It will be our duty to try and impress the rest of the world that we are united in our desire for full independence.¹³⁰⁶

In the 1950s, Premier Endeley "advocated secession from Nigeria with such fervor that overnight, he became the darling of Cameroonians," placing him on the same political level as the elder

¹³⁰⁵ "Dangerous Precedent," *West African Pilot*, 19 August 1957.

¹³⁰⁶ *Proceedings of the Resumed Nigeria Constitutional Conference*, Vol.1, London 1958,

statesmen Manga Williams.¹³⁰⁷ By 1958, Premier Endeley was criticized because the burden of office had mellowed him.¹³⁰⁸ However, Endeleys' lack of interest in secession did not remove the Southern Cameroonians' desire to secede. The secessionist banner was picked up by Foncha, Endeley's former protégé.¹³⁰⁹ To stem the increasing support for the KNDP, Premier Endeley and his Kamerun National Congress (KNC) aligned themselves with the Kamerun Peoples Party (KPP), hoping that such an alliance would bring victory in the regional election.¹³¹⁰

Nerius Namuso Mbile, renowned trade unionist, journalist, and politician, recalled the intensity that accompanied the plebiscite and the impact of both internal and external political actors:

The UPC and One Kamerun parties in their open meetings all over Southern Cameroons went all out against the KNC and KPP as those who wished to "sell" Cameroon to Nigeria. The UPC after being banned in "French Cameroon" crossed the Mungo and used the liberal atmosphere in "British Cameroons" to mount an intense attack on the KNC and KPP for venturing to desire association with Nigeria. The One Kamerun by Mr. Ndeh Ntumazah was after all only a local name (in Southern Cameroons) for the UPC since both parties had identical political views. So, the KNC and KPP found themselves heavily opposed by friends of the KNDP, who stopped at nothing to vilify those who did not accept their point of view. To them, anyone who dared think twice in their slogan of "Cameroon Unification Immediate" was not fit to be.¹³¹¹

The KNC and KPP understood that unification was not a simple matter but instead required a series of high-level meetings along with the will of the people. This reality did not deter the KNDP,

¹³⁰⁷"Eclipse of Endeley," *West African Pilot*, 31 January 1959. The KNDP was founded by Mr. John Ngu Foncha and Mr. Augustine Ngom Jua in 1955 after Mr. Endeley stopped advocating for secession from Nigeria and unification with French Cameroon. The latter was the main political agenda of the KNDP. Of equal importance the One Kamerun movement was founded by Ndeh Ntumazah in 1957 following the banning of the Union des Populations in Southern Cameroon.

¹³⁰⁸ "Eclipse of Endeley," *West African Pilot*, 31 January 1959.

¹³⁰⁹ "Eclipse of Endeley," *West African Pilot*, 31 January 1959.

¹³¹⁰ "Eclipse of Endeley," *West African Pilot*, 31 January 1959.

¹³¹¹N.N. Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story: Memories of An Authentic Eyewitness*, (Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group, 2011), 101.

UPC, or OK, who used the call for unification to build a political base, a call which painted Nigeria, specifically the Igbo, as the enemy of the Cameroonian people.¹³¹²

In 1959, Foncha delivered the KNDP's national address, telling the crowd that only secession from Nigeria and unification with French Cameroon could serve Southern Cameroon's national aspirations.¹³¹³ Lashing out at his political opposition, Foncha called the KNC "political confusionists" because of the party's shifting position on secession.¹³¹⁴ In 1960, Foncha wished Nigeria well but remarked that "he would not live to see Southern Cameroon turned into a Nigerian colony."¹³¹⁵ The latter political strategy, rooted in xenophobia and fearmongering, summarily defeated Endeley, and Foncha became the Premier of Southern Cameroon.¹³¹⁶ Spokesmen for the NCNC and AG offered congratulations though each was couched in veiled critiques of Foncha and his strong secessionist stance.¹³¹⁷ Fred Anyiam, NCNC National Public Secretary, "believed that the KNDP used the 'secession stunt' as a vote catcher. He hoped that having gained office, the party would have second thoughts."¹³¹⁸ Alfred Rewane, Political Secretary to Obafemi Awolowo, wished the British Treasury would assume responsibility for Southern Cameroon's deficit previously handled by Nigeria.¹³¹⁹

Regardless of the result, the Nigerian Federal Government had to be prepared for each outcome. A vote in support of secession would create an international boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria for the first time since 1914, drastically impacting transportation,

¹³¹² Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 101.

¹³¹³ "Secession is Only Hope of S. Cameroons," *West African Pilot*, 7 January 1958

¹³¹⁴ "Secession is Only Hope of S. Cameroons," *West African Pilot*, 7 January 1958.

¹³¹⁵ "Secession is Only Hope of S. Cameroons," *West African Pilot*, 7 January 1958.

¹³¹⁶ "Secession is Only Hope of S. Cameroons," *West African Pilot*, 7 January 1958.

¹³¹⁷ "Secession is Only Hope of S. Cameroons," *West African Pilot*, 7 January 1958.

¹³¹⁸ "Cameroons Elections End In Victory For Foncha," *West African Pilot*, 31 January 1959.

¹³¹⁹ "Cameroons Elections End In Victory For Foncha," *West African Pilot*, 31 January 1959.

communication, and commerce.¹³²⁰ Deliberations on the establishment of an international boundary took place in September of 1960:

It is not possible to say what the government of the Trusteeship Territory of the Southern Cameroons propose with regards to the imposition of import and export duties although it is to be presumed that no drastic measures would be taken by that Government before the plebiscite to determine the ultimate future of the territory. I am to say, however, that the urgency of the problems raised by the creation of an international boundary across an important route for the evacuation of produce is fully appreciated.¹³²¹

Nigeria attained independence on 1 October 1960, placing additional pressure on the possibility of nationally controlled borders between it and Southern Cameroon.¹³²² Subsequently, three customs stations—one at Mfum on the Cross River, one at Ekang at the crossing of the Awa River and the Calabar-Mamfe Road, and one at Ikang—were proposed to handle this new phenomenon of international trade.¹³²³ The existing police stations at Obudu, Ikom, and Oban patrolled the area.¹³²⁴ These routes became important to refugees during the height of the Biafran War.

The support of the Foncha Administration for secession created friction with the Nigerians in Southern Cameroon. Before the plebiscite vote, a rumor spread that Nigerian Civil Servants in Southern Cameroon led by Igbos conspired to strike in order to paralyze the Foncha Administration.¹³²⁵ A Cameroonian office custodian uncovered the plot, and Foncha, armed with this information, called an emergency cabinet meeting and decided to terminate all Nigerian Civil Servants, whom he then replaced with Cameroonians.¹³²⁶

¹³²⁰ *Cameroons Plantations Conditions in*, NAC, CADIST 3.6.5.

¹³²¹ *Cameroons Plantations Conditions in*, NAC, CADIST 3.6.5.

¹³²² *Cameroons Plantations Conditions in*, NAC, CADIST 3.6.5.

¹³²³ *Cameroons Plantations Conditions in*, NAC, CADIST 3.6.5.

¹³²⁴ *Cameroons Plantations Conditions in*, NAC, CADIST 3.6.5.

¹³²⁵ Anthony Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons: Prime Lessons for Cameroon*, (Denver: Spears Media Press, 2016), 88

¹³²⁶ Ndi, *The Golden Age*, 88.

Igbos, because of their numbers and commercial acumen, were singled out as the most destructive force impeding unification between Francophone Cameroun and Southern Cameroon.¹³²⁷ Historian Victor Amaazee referred to this as the “Igbo Scare,” while Historian Anthony Ndi labeled the Igbo “Black Imperialists.”¹³²⁸ These terms represent two sides of the same coin in that they blame the Igbo for the underdevelopment and exploitation of Southern Cameroon. Ndi argued that the Igbo as Black Imperialists was worse than the British, and secessionists alleged that Southern Cameroon was an “Igbo back-yard,” where they exploited the land, defiled the women and ignored traditional customs.¹³²⁹ Amaazee admitted that while in certain cases there were grounds for the resentment of the Igbo, a large number of politicians exploited ethnic stereotypes for political gain.¹³³⁰ Politicians used stranger anxiety to create xenophobic fear and drive Southern Cameroon from Nigeria into the waiting arms of Cameroun. With the Igbo being painted in a negative light, there was little need to question why Cameroon should be united under its German borders when these borders were never indigenous boundaries. For their part, Francophone political actors and parties were effective in driving a social, economic and cultural wedge.¹³³¹

In his famous letter, Foncha painted Nigeria as an imperialistic force that desired to make Southern Cameroon its colony.¹³³² Foncha told the Southern Cameroon House of Assembly that he had in his possession a letter that exposed “the oppositions plan to sell Cameroon to

¹³²⁷ Ndi, *The Golden Age*, 88.

¹³²⁸ Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons*, 79; Victor Amaazee, “The Igbo Scare in the British Cameroons, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1990): 281-293.

¹³²⁹ Ndi, *The Golden Age*, 99.

¹³³⁰ Victor Amaazee, “The Igbo Scare in the British Cameroons, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990): 281-293.

¹³³¹ Victor Amaazee, “The Igbo Scare in the British Cameroons, 1945-61,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 31, No.2 (1990): 281-293.

¹³³² Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 132.

Nigeria.”¹³³³ According to Mbile, the KNC/KPP members demanded that he immediately present the letter, something he refused to do.¹³³⁴ “In the circumstance, the opposition called the Prime Minister an alarmist who was calling ‘wolf’ when he was perhaps only seeing a simple dog.”¹³³⁵ The KNC/KPP set out to obtain the letter to counter its outrageous claims.¹³³⁶ In contrast to Foncha’s incendiary claims, the famous letter was merely notes written by R. J. K Dibonge to Endeley following a Lagos board meeting.¹³³⁷ Concerning the contents of the letter and the damage Foncha’s lie caused, Mbile wrote:

None of the ideas could, of course, be interpreted by any sensible person as selling Cameroon to Nigeria, a phrase the KNDP always used to carry away the sentiment of the unwary, gullible folk unused to the barefaced lies of [politicized] demagogues to whom Nigeria was a faraway country trying to buy Cameroon.¹³³⁸

The build-up to the plebiscite was further inflamed by Francophone Cameroun, which had a vested interest in swaying public opinion toward unification.¹³³⁹ Mbile vividly recalled the role of Francophone political activities in Southern Cameroon, writing “the KNDP for instance openly obtained support in money and in propaganda material from French Cameroun and when it became independent, from the Republic of Cameroun itself.”¹³⁴⁰ The Cameroun campaign attracted the most elite of the political elite: “President Ahidjo actually once came to Kumba and addressed a meeting at Hausa quarters, while I [Mbile] was addressing another rally in Kumba town at the same time.”¹³⁴¹ The KNDP received large sums of money from the Cameroun government and private officials, enabling them to reach increasing numbers of voters.¹³⁴² Mbile recalled the

¹³³³ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 132.

¹³³⁴ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 132.

¹³³⁵ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 133.

¹³³⁶ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 133.

¹³³⁷ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 133.

¹³³⁸ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 132-133.

¹³³⁹ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 132-133.

¹³⁴⁰ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 133-134.

¹³⁴¹ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 133-134.

¹³⁴² Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 132-133.

KNDP, “arranged with their friends across the Mungo to bring a number of bulldozers and caterpillars to parade up and down the streets of Kumba Town, to show the populace some of the machines that stood ready to open roads everywhere in the territory, if Southern Cameroon opted for the Republic.”¹³⁴³

In areas with large stranger populations such as Victoria, Kumba, and Mamfe, the KNDP successfully exploited stranger anxiety. Nigerians, synonymous with Igbo, were accused of all manner of crimes and disregard of cultural taboos.¹³⁴⁴ When not feeding into stranger anxiety, the KNDP twisted plebiscite questions to further feed into cultural, social, ethnic, and economic fears. Victor Julius Ngoh noted that at certain political rallies the KNDP presented alternative plebiscite questions as:

Do you like Dr. Endeley, the Bakweri man? Or Do you like Foncha, the Bamenda man? At other times the questions were presented as “Do you wish to stay in your country, the Cameroons? Or Do you wish to sell your country to the Ibo who will dethrone your fons (chiefs) and take all your land and property?”¹³⁴⁵

The KNDP was the Grassfielders’ party, and as the party rose and fell, so too did the morale of people.¹³⁴⁶ When the KNDP alleged that Dr. Endeley had insulted the Fonship by using Fon Galega II as his houseboy in London in 1957, the Grassfielders believed them.¹³⁴⁷ This level of disrespect became insurmountable for the Cameroon Peoples-National Convention (CPNC), the merger of the KNC and the KPP, to overcome politically in the Grassfield.¹³⁴⁸

¹³⁴³ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 133-134.

¹³⁴⁴ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 132-133.

¹³⁴⁵ Victor Julius Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961: A Constitutional History*. Burlington, (VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001), 150.

¹³⁴⁶ Victor Julius Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961: A Constitutional History*. Burlington, (VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001), 150.

¹³⁴⁷ Victor Julius Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961: A Constitutional History*. Burlington, (VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001), 150.

¹³⁴⁸ Victor Julius Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961: A Constitutional History*. Burlington, (VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001), 150.

The plebiscite also took place against the backdrop of a robust anti-Reunificationist stance directed toward the UPC and OK, spearheaded by the CPNC.¹³⁴⁹ The UPC offices were burned, and its funds confiscated.¹³⁵⁰ Additionally, UPC leadership was barred from meeting with the United Nations Visiting Mission, and its members were harassed in Southern Cameroon and when repatriated to Cameroun, summarily executed.¹³⁵¹

The plebiscite began on 11 February 1961 and was overseen by Dr. Djalal Abadon, the official United Nations representative in charge, along with a 35-member international staff.¹³⁵² Southern Cameroonians were faced with two options: “(a) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria? (b) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of the Cameroons?”¹³⁵³ Premier Foncha and the KNDP favored integration with the Republic of Cameroun, while Dr. Endeley and the CPNC supported an integration with Nigeria that would allow for regional autonomy.¹³⁵⁴ The *Chicago Defender* reported that through the course of the election, there were upwards of 40,000 Francophone Cameroonian refugees in Southern Cameroon who fled the war between the UPC and Ahidjo forces supported by the French Military and Intelligence in the newly independent Republic of Cameroun.¹³⁵⁵

¹³⁴⁹ Bongfen Chem-Langhëë, *The Paradoxes of Self-Determination in the Cameroons Under United Kingdom Administration: The Search for Identity, Well-Being and Continuity* (New York: University Press of America, 2004), 168-169.

¹³⁵⁰ Bongfen Chem-Langhëë, *The Paradoxes of Self-Determination in the Cameroons Under United Kingdom Administration: The Search for Identity, Well-Being and Continuity* (New York: University Press of America, 2004), 168-169.

¹³⁵¹ Bongfen Chem-Langhëë, *The Paradoxes of Self-Determination in the Cameroons Under United Kingdom Administration: The Search for Identity, Well-Being and Continuity* (New York: University Press of America, 2004), 168-169.

¹³⁵² *Southern Cameroon Gazette* 1960-61

¹³⁵³ *Southern Cameroon Gazette* 1960-61

¹³⁵⁴ “British Cameroons Make Plans for Freedom Vote,” *The Chicago Defender*, 18 February 1961.

¹³⁵⁵ “British Cameroons Make Plans for Freedom Vote,” *The Chicago Defender*, 18 February 1961.

Plebiscite results were overwhelmingly in support of secession: 186,000 voted in support, while 48,000 were against.¹³⁵⁶ In the immediate aftermath of the vote, it was unclear how the two territories, separated for 40 plus years, would be merged.¹³⁵⁷ Southern Cameroon's decision to join the Republic of Cameroun created a series of logistical, economic, and political issues. While united under German colonialism, since the end of WWI, they had been governed by two separate and diametrically different colonial powers.¹³⁵⁸ The fear of Igbo strangers, which surged after World War II, was the fundamental reason that Cameroonians supported the KNDP and Foncha, who campaigned on a platform of unification with French Cameroun and freedom from Igbo domination.¹³⁵⁹ However, it was a platform based on bravado, but lacking in substance, especially when compared to the political power wielded by Ahidjo.

One of the first actions taken by the Foncha administration following the plebiscite was the formation of the Southern Cameroon Public Service Commission led by Jack A. Kisob.¹³⁶⁰ The directive of the commission was the Cameroonization of the Civil Service, meaning all Nigerian Civil Servants were fired.¹³⁶¹ Hon. John Wilson of the West African Department wrote in 1966 that Southern Cameroonians "feared the devil they knew i.e., the Ibo more than the devil they did not know quite so well, i.e., East Cameroonians."¹³⁶² The reality was that Anglophone Cameroonians lacked in-depth knowledge of Cameroun and French policy.¹³⁶³ Ahidjo, who was

¹³⁵⁶ "Cameroons Vote on Union," *Daily Mail*, 15 February 1961

¹³⁵⁷ "Cameroons Vote on Union," *Daily Mail*, 15 February 1961

¹³⁵⁸ "Cameroons Vote on Union," *Daily Mail*, 15 February 1961

¹³⁵⁹ Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons*, 88.

¹³⁶⁰ Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons*, 88.

¹³⁶¹ Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons*, 88.

¹³⁶² *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos*, 1968, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50

¹³⁶³ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos*, 1968, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50

appointed Premier in 1958 by France, ensured he had no viable political opponent.¹³⁶⁴ Ahidjo was a Northerner with a deep-seated fear of the South, specifically the UPC and its stronghold among the Bamileke. He feared that a victorious political opposition or outright coup would arise from the South.¹³⁶⁵ Over time, this obsession led to a totalitarian grip on the region. Two weeks before official unification, Ahidjo sent troops to occupy Southern Cameroon under the pretext of stopping UPC attacks.¹³⁶⁶ Ultimately, these troops never left Southern Cameroon but, rather than protect, kept a watchful eye on the actions of all Anglophones.

Emele Titus left Umuchieze as a young man in the care of his maternal uncle, a CDC laborer.¹³⁶⁷ Plantation work, which was physically taxing, did not suit everyone, especially not Titus, who preferred the freedom trading offered. According to Titus, “I went there to start as a trader. I traded in cloth and clothing, that was my initial trade. After I entered provisions, I used to come from Cameroon to Nigeria every month to buy goods.”¹³⁶⁸ Trading allowed Titus to travel extensively across Southern Cameroon and become a respected member of the Igbo community. Titus recalled the following about life in Southern Cameroon during the plebiscite:

I was in Cameroon in 1961 during the Plebiscite. After the Plebiscite, they went to follow their brothers, while Northern Cameroon entered Nigeria. They were in support of Nigeria, Cameroon has Bamileke, etc. But only the area of Dr. Endeley was in support of joining Cameroon. But the other areas support Dr. Foncha who is the leader of that. Then coming into the town for the Igbos there in the town, I was one of the leaders. As a leader for Nigerians and the Igbos, I only advise them to keep peace. And to leave Cameroon only to decide. After 11 of February Nigeria send us a [consul], who came from town to town to advise us to stay clear from what Cameroon is doing. Where we stay there is no trouble unless you cause the trouble by yourself. Cameroonians did not give us any trouble. But we, the Igbos, used to teach them because they don't know what is called civilization. Now

¹³⁶⁴ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos*, 1968, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50

¹³⁶⁵ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos*, 1968, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50

¹³⁶⁶ Carlson Anyangwe, *Imperialistic Politics in Cameroun: Resistance & the Inception of the Statehood of Southern Cameroons*, (Bamenda: Langaa, 2008), 32.

¹³⁶⁷ Anyangwe, *Imperialistic Politics in Cameroun*

¹³⁶⁸ Emele Titus, *Oral Interview: Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. May 31, 2016.

the Igbos lead them in what to do. When I was there, no Cameroonian knew how to trade. Unless one area called Bamileke people, we used to call them Bamileke Igbo people. They learn how to trade from Igbos. They learned how to plant yam from Igbos, now they got yam more than us now because their land is very fertile. They only believe on that CDC, they only believe in planting banana, rubber, and palm. Where that plantation is own by the British and after independence it returned to Cameroon.¹³⁶⁹

In leaving Southern Cameroonians to decide for themselves, Igbos showed they prized economic growth over engaging in political debates. What was perhaps less known to Igbos, who refrained from engaging politically, was the strong influence of the Francophone Cameroonians in elections.¹³⁷⁰ It was a common sentiment held by many Igbos that they brought “civilization” to Cameroonians or that they were “lazy.” Such language played into the political agenda of the KNDP. The Igbo interpretation of Southern Cameroonians was through the lens of a mercantile class that largely viewed success through economic rather than social means.¹³⁷¹ Igbos who worked for the CDC never referred to the Cameroonians as lazy because they worked alongside an array of ethnic groups.¹³⁷² Secession changed much in the lives of the Igbos; many were fired from the CDC, but even as a separate nation, Cameroon offered “greener pastures.” Many of the men who were fired had a second career, and they now entered trading fulltime.¹³⁷³ Thus, while the number of Igbos in government-owned jobs dropped, the number in the private and informal sectors expanded.¹³⁷⁴

¹³⁶⁹ Emele Titus, *Oral Interview: Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. May 31, 2016.

¹³⁷⁰ Emele Titus, *Oral Interview: Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. May 31, 2016.

¹³⁷¹ Emele Titus, *Oral Interview: Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. May 31, 2016.

¹³⁷² Emele Titus, *Oral Interview: Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. May 31, 2016.

¹³⁷³ Emele Titus, *Oral Interview: Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. May 31, 2016.

¹³⁷⁴ Emele Titus, *Oral Interview: Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. May 31, 2016.

Common knowledge in Cameroonian, French, British, and Nigerian circles was that Southern Cameroonians became convinced that a vote in support of Nigeria was a vote to become an Igbo satellite.¹³⁷⁵ Ndi argued that the perception of the Igbos contributed to their being regarded as “addicted dog-eaters, cannibals, rapists, and murderers.”¹³⁷⁶ As Arthur Richards, Lord Milverton of Lagos and of Clifton who governed Nigeria from 1943 to-1947, explained, “they [simply] did not want to be dominated by the Ibos.”¹³⁷⁷ However, the reality of the situation quickly became apparent as compromises on the form of government, currency, policing, taxation, law, and local administration all needed to be finalized before formal unification. Tripartite meetings were held between the British Government, Southern Cameroon, and the Republic of Cameroun to address as many issues as possible.¹³⁷⁸ It did not help that Francophone Cameroun was numerically and geographically larger. On 1 October 1961, Southern Cameroon merged with the Republic of Cameroun, with Foncha and President Ahidjo agreeing on a federation between the two territories in which Ahidjo remained President and Foncha became Vice-President until new elections could be held. Politicians believed a federation would address any political or social difficulties.¹³⁷⁹

However, internal security problems caused by UPC insurgents plagued the merger.¹³⁸⁰ The UPC wanted to seize power in Southern Cameroon and wage a war against the Republic of Cameroun.¹³⁸¹ Scholars estimate that there were upwards of 1,200-armed communists in mountain

¹³⁷⁵ Ndi, *The Golden Age*, 87.

¹³⁷⁶ Ndi, *The Golden Age*, 87.

¹³⁷⁷ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos*, 1968, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50

¹³⁷⁸ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos*, 1968, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50

¹³⁷⁹ “Security Problem in S. Cameroons,” *Times*, 1 August 1961.

¹³⁸⁰ “Security Problem in S. Cameroons,” *Times*, 1 August 1961.

¹³⁸¹ “Security Problem in S. Cameroons,” *Times*, 1 August 1961.

camps 50 miles northeast of Buea.¹³⁸² Even though the UPC lacked community support, their presence did not prevent the last remaining British Battalion from transferring power to Cameroonian military and police units.¹³⁸³ The situation in Cameroun during the merger was bleak as public executions followed the nation into independence. For example, in October 1960, Felix Moumie, UPC President, was assassinated in Geneva by French operatives who poisoned his coffee.¹³⁸⁴ To maximize the impact of executions, they were made both public and compulsory.¹³⁸⁵ In the Mungo and Bamileke regions, hotbeds of UPC activity, executions became routine.¹³⁸⁶ The state went a step further and, in some cases, displayed the severed heads of those executed.¹³⁸⁷ The purpose of the executions was to curb the resistance movements that threatened the new Republic and France, who orchestrated events from the shadows.

In 1968 during the Biafran War in Nigeria, R. H. Brown contextualized the agenda behind Southern Cameroon's 1961 secession:

It was presumably fairly clear to many West Cameroonians at the time that a vote against Nigeria, whilst protecting them from Ibo domination, would not put them in a strong position with regard to the four million French-speaking Easterners, some of whom such as the powerful Bamileke people, have just as much energy and acumen as the Ibos. And at the time, although far sighted West Cameroonians may have had premonitions about what is currently happening in Eastern Nigeria, the security and economic situations in much of East Cameroon were very far from reassuring.

To be fair to Lord Milverton, many prominent West Cameroonians tend, with hindsight, to give much importance to what they know of the Ibos (I have heard two West Cameroonian ministers in the Federal Government do so recently) and not enough to what seems, on closer examination, to have been the major reason for the result of the plebiscite: a desire, based partly on fact, partly on myth, for the coming together again of what had once been an entity called Cameroon or Kamerun.¹³⁸⁸

¹³⁸²Eric Downton, "Southern Cameroons Ready Terror," *Daily Telegraph*, 29 September 1961

¹³⁸³ Eric Downton, "Southern Cameroons Ready Terror," *Daily Telegraph*, 29 September 1961

¹³⁸⁴ Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws*, 237-238.

¹³⁸⁵ Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws*, 237-238.

¹³⁸⁶ Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws*, 237-238.

¹³⁸⁷ Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws*, 237-238.

¹³⁸⁸ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos, 1968*, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50.

Germany ruled Cameroon from 1884 to 1914, and it was under those borders that the pan-Cameroonian ideology developed, though even under German rule, Cameroon was not unified in the full sense of the word.¹³⁸⁹ Following Cameroon's separation, the myth of what had been under German rule grew to unrealistic proportions.¹³⁹⁰ The Duala were very close to the Bakweri, and a few Duala families had "branches in Victoria."¹³⁹¹ Such familial connections were no different from Igbo, Ibibio, or Ijaw men having families with the Issangeli along the Rio del Rey.

The Igbo experience in Cameroon drastically changed following the plebiscite as overnight Igbos became foreigners. Festus, born in 1953, attended primary school in Tiko Town, yet suddenly he was ordered to purchase a 10,000-franc residential permit.¹³⁹² The CDC and all government jobs became Cameroonized.¹³⁹³ Festus' senior brother worked as an accountant in Yaounde Hospital, and as he recalled: "the Cameroonians never knew he was a Nigerian, because of that he married a Cameroonian lady, they took him as Cameroonian."¹³⁹⁴ His position and obligation as the eldest brother allowed him to provide Festus with a Cameroonian identity card, meaning he could move around Cameroon more easily than the Igbos who purchased residential permits.¹³⁹⁵ Igbos had to adjust to a lifestyle in which they could be stopped on the street by a gendarme and forced to show proper documentation; the consequences of not having this documentation could prove severe.¹³⁹⁶ As Festus recounted, "they maltreated some Igbos; you are

¹³⁸⁹ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos, 1968*, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50.

¹³⁹⁰ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos, 1968*, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50.

¹³⁹¹ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos, 1968*, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50.

¹³⁹² Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

¹³⁹³ Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

¹³⁹⁴ Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

¹³⁹⁵ Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

¹³⁹⁶ Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

first of all detained. Then after detention, they come and deport you and leave you at the boundary by the road. Some are transported by sea to Calabar.”¹³⁹⁷ While Cameroon remained a land of “greener pastures,” the merger added additional stress to the lives of Igbo traders.

Fear of Igbo domination did not subside on 1 October 1960 nor on 1 October 1961. While politicians were apprehensive about the actions of Azikiwe and the NCNC, it was the only nationalist party in Nigeria that effectively cut across regional and ethnic boundaries. Whether in trade, civil service, or education, resentment for the overwhelming presence of Igbos grew within the Nigerian Federation until it ignited the Biafran War, which had a profound impact on Igbos in Nigeria and those who remained in Cameroon. In a decade, Igbos in Cameroon would go from being resented to embraced as refugees.

Igbos in Cameroon During the Biafran War 1967-1970

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu declared the Republic of Biafra on 30 May 1967 under the mandate that he was protecting the Igbo.¹³⁹⁸ This mandate resulted from fears rooted in events that occurred under General Johnson Thomas Umunnakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi, Nigeria’s first military dictator, who assumed power on 16 January 1966.¹³⁹⁹ Approximately four months later on 24 May 1966, Ironsi issued Decree No. 34, which banned political organizations, ended the Nigerian Federation, and unified the Civil Services.¹⁴⁰⁰

In the North, this Decree was seen as further proof of an Igbo conspiracy for national domination.¹⁴⁰¹ Since the 1930s, Igbo traders and Civil Servants were a significant presence in the

¹³⁹⁷Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo*, Owerri, Imo State, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

¹³⁹⁸ Arthur Agwuncha Nwankwo and Samuel Udochukwu Ifejika, *Biafra: The Making of a Nation*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 149. For a more in-depth understanding of the Biafra War see the following monographs: Peter Baxter, *Biafra: The Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*; Chima Korie, eds. *The Nigerian-Biafra War: Genocide and Politics of Memory*, G.E.O. Ogum, *Echoes of Biafra: How Ghanaian Press Covered Nigerian-Biafra Crisis*, Ben Gbulie, *The Fall of Biafra*.

¹³⁹⁹ Agwuncha Nwankwo and Samuel Udochukwu Ifejika, *Biafra*

¹⁴⁰⁰ Agwuncha Nwankwo and Samuel Udochukwu Ifejika, *Biafra*

¹⁴⁰¹ Nwankwo and Ifejika, *Biafra*, 149-150

that area.¹⁴⁰² In Jos, Igbo primarily traded in construction materials, electrical products, catering services, and school stationery.¹⁴⁰³ According to C. G Ames, the large-scale Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba, traders chose to bank their funds through transfers to their hometowns, and over time these profits were used to purchase land in Jos, thus enabling enterprising Igbo to become landlords.¹⁴⁰⁴ Historian, S.U. Fwatshak reported that Igbo oral history collaborators in Jos claimed the Igbo created the timber industry in 1940 and shortly thereafter were instrumental in establishing the butchery trade.¹⁴⁰⁵ The economic reach of the Igbo community in Jos increased resentment following Independence, similar to what Igbos experienced in Southern Cameroon but different in the use of violence.¹⁴⁰⁶ In response to Decree No. 34, riots erupted in Kano, Zaria, Katsina, Jos, Bukuru, Gusau, and Sokoto, with the rioters attacking Igbo property and communities.¹⁴⁰⁷ These unfettered assaults forced Northern Igbos to flee to the Southeast, with many taking only what they could carry. It was during these tense times that the Republic of Biafra declared its independence from Nigeria.¹⁴⁰⁸

Before the first shot, each side had strengths, yet neither was dominant. Igbo officers and technicians provided the bulk of the Federal Government officer corps and technically skilled labor, which gave the Republic of Biafra the advantage in communication, planning, and maintenance; however, it lacked a professional army.¹⁴⁰⁹ On the other hand, the Federal Military

¹⁴⁰² Nwankwo and Ifejika, *Biafra*, 149-150

¹⁴⁰³ Nwankwo and Ifejika, *Biafra*, 149-150

¹⁴⁰⁴ C.G. Ames, *Gazetteer of the Plateau Province*, (London: Franc Cass, 1934), 297.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Ames, *Gazetteer of the Plateau Province*

¹⁴⁰⁶ S.U. Fwatshak, *African Entrepreneurship in Jos, Central Nigeria, 1902-1985*, (Durham: Carolina Academic Press), 115-116

¹⁴⁰⁷ Fwatshak, *African Entrepreneurship*, 116.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Nwankwo and Ifejika, *Biafra*, 149-150

¹⁴⁰⁹ *Central Intelligence Agency: Office of National Estimates*, 15 June 1967

Government (FMG) lacked adequate communication and technical skills but had a professional army, navy, and air force.¹⁴¹⁰

What the Republic of Biafra lacked, it made up for in technical knowledge through organizations such as the Biafran Science Group, a collection of Igbo scientists and technicians who became invaluable in sustaining the Biafran military.¹⁴¹¹ At the outset of the war, Nigeria was ranked 11th globally in oil production, with American and British companies having the most invested in the industry.¹⁴¹² The Biafran Science Group “kept the Port Harcourt oil refinery operating after all foreign technicians left” by creating homemade stills that produced diesel, kerosene, and low octane gasoline.¹⁴¹³ They also became feared for their ability to manufacture “armored cars using sheet metal, build crude rockets tipped with grenades to fire at federal planes,” and anti-vehicle mines.¹⁴¹⁴

Before the war, Igbos formed the nucleus of the Nigerian Foreign Ministry, and they used these connections to garner international support and recognition from Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Zambia, and Haiti.¹⁴¹⁵ Christopher Mojekwu was instrumental in gaining Portuguese and French assistance, and France provided arms and ammunition through night airdrops from Libreville, Gabon, and Abidjan, Ivory Coast.¹⁴¹⁶ In 1968, these airdrops were instrumental in creating a military stalemate that lasted until 1969, when federal forces took Umuahia and

¹⁴¹⁰*Central Intelligence Agency: Office of National Estimates*, 15 June 1967

¹⁴¹¹*Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A

¹⁴¹²*Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A

¹⁴¹³*Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A.

¹⁴¹⁴*Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A.

¹⁴¹⁵*Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A.

¹⁴¹⁶*Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A

exacerbated the refugee crisis.¹⁴¹⁷ The Republic of Cameroun under President Ahidjo never recognized Biafra.¹⁴¹⁸ Instead at the command of General Yakubu Gowon, Cameroonian troops blocked the water and roads that led to Nigeria. The blockade made it difficult, but not impossible, for Igbos to communicate with loved ones back home.¹⁴¹⁹

Relief Organizations were essential in sustaining the Biafran economy, purchasing local food and services in foreign currency, which allowed Biafra to use the funds to purchase much needed war materials. American and British politicians proposed using established road networks for transporting aid to the country; however this idea was rejected by Biafra, who feared such routes would be used by the FMG to defeat the regime.¹⁴²⁰ The FMG was equally suspicious of an airlift that it surmised was bringing both aid and weapons into Biafra.

Fedelis Ogu recalled that he was taken to Limbe, formally Victoria, in 1966 by “somebody who was doing trading.”¹⁴²¹ There Fedelis traded in used clothes before becoming a tailor. “I was in Cameroon during the war, I came back and stayed one week, and I heard there was going to be a war, so I wanted to return back to Cameroon to bring my things and they closed the border.”¹⁴²² At the outset of the war, many remained in the village or city.¹⁴²³ However, those who knew not only the main routes but also obscure creeks and small roads used them to enter Cameroon as

¹⁴¹⁷*Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A.

¹⁴¹⁸*Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A

¹⁴¹⁹*Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A.

¹⁴²⁰*Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A.

¹⁴²¹Fedelis Ogu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhettaeforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

¹⁴²²Fedelis Ogu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhettaeforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

¹⁴²³Fedelis Ogu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhettaeforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

security tightened.¹⁴²⁴ While official channels were closed, Fedelis managed to find his way around the blockades and returned to Limbe, where he remained for the totality of the war. Fedelis helped all those he could who sought refuge, recalling “I trained a lot of children, even Igbos and Yorubas and Togolese and Ghanaians. I even went to Bible School, I have my books down there and I was a Sunday school teacher then teaching a lot of children and people, and yes, I helped people that arrived during the Biafran War.”¹⁴²⁵ The Igbo community welcomed refugees with open arms but had little patience for Igbos who appeared to support the FMG.¹⁴²⁶ On 21 October 1966, the Igbo community in Bamenda “attacked the property of an Igbo suspected of supportive activities on behalf of the FMG.”¹⁴²⁷ A local police station was attacked, and more than 425 people were arrested in connection to the incident.¹⁴²⁸ Such an attack was an anomaly because the majority of Igbos in Cameroon supported the Biafran Government.

A year into the Biafran War, the FMG recaptured two-thirds of Biafra.¹⁴²⁹ Despite dwindling supplies and growing famine, the Biafran Army continued to fight for the actualization of the country.¹⁴³⁰ In 1968, FMG’s primary objective was the destruction of the “improvised rebel airstrip near Ihiala.”¹⁴³¹ This airfield brought in guns, ammunition, and aid, all of which were essential for sustaining the war effort as famine, which gained international attention, spread across

¹⁴²⁴ Fedelis Ogu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhettaforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

¹⁴²⁵ Fedelis Ogu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhettaforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

¹⁴²⁶ Fedelis Ogu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhettaforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

¹⁴²⁷ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos, 1968*, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50

¹⁴²⁸ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos, 1968*, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50

¹⁴²⁹ *Directorate of Intelligence: Weekly Summery*, CIA, 12 July 1968, No. 0028/68

¹⁴³⁰ *Directorate of Intelligence: Weekly Summery*, CIA, 12 July 1968, No. 0028/68

¹⁴³¹ *Directorate of Intelligence: Weekly Summery*, CIA, 12 July 1968, No. 0028/68

Biafra.¹⁴³² The International Red Cross and religious relief organizations played a crucial role in fighting the spread of the famine and malnutrition in general. Upwards of two to three million Biafrans were displaced, and the fall of Umuahia created an additional 500,000 refugees.¹⁴³³ Relief agencies managed to feed approximately 1.5 million Biafrans.

Cecilia Nnaji arrived in Kumba in 1964 to assist her aunt with her new baby.¹⁴³⁴ She had made a good life for herself in Kumba before marrying an Igbo man and moving to Duala where she bore 9 children.¹⁴³⁵ Cecilia was still in Kumba during the Biafran War, and her recollections highlight the lengths the Igbo communities went to assist their brothers and sisters in despair. The Republic of Cameroun blocked the roads and waterways from Nigeria, making it nearly impossible for someone without prior knowledge to navigate through the area. However, these blockades did not deter the Igbo community from helping in any way they could. Nnaji recalled, “it was difficult but one-man Dennis he was in the Red Cross in Cameroun and he was sending things from Cameroon to people in [Nigeria]. But then the Red Cross people caught him and sent him back to Biafra.”¹⁴³⁶ Referencing her experiences with Cameroonians during this time, she remarked, “the Anglophone people saw themselves as Nigerians, so people got along well.”¹⁴³⁷

The consequences of the war, the refugee crisis and the famine altered the perception of the Igbos in Cameroon; it transitioned from one of contempt to one of acceptance. Anglophones changed their position because of life under authoritarian Francophone domination.¹⁴³⁸ In 1966,

¹⁴³²Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: *Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A.

¹⁴³³Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summery Special Report: *Biafra Two Years After Secession*, CIA, 29 May 1969, NO. 0372/69A.

¹⁴³⁴Madam Cecilia Nnaji, *Oral Interview Owerri*, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, Jr. 15 July 2018.

¹⁴³⁵Madam Cecilia Nnaji, *Oral Interview Owerri*, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, Jr. 15 July 2018.

¹⁴³⁶Madam Cecilia Nnaji, *Oral Interview Owerri*, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, Jr. 15 July 2018.

¹⁴³⁷Madam Cecilia Nnaji, *Oral Interview Owerri*, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, Jr. 15 July 2018.

¹⁴³⁸Madam Cecilia Nnaji, *Oral Interview Owerri*, Imo State, Nigeria, James K. Blackwell, Jr. 15 July 2018.

Ahidjo abolished the multi-party democracy in Southern Cameroon and passed legislation that curbed freedom of information, movement, the press, assembly, and association.¹⁴³⁹

Helen Ubochi was in Tumbe during the Biafran War but remained informed about unfolding events; she recounted her experiences of the Biafran War from her home in Southern Cameroon:

It affected us because we were hearing on the radio that they have killed all Biafrans here and we heard that on the radio, we didn't see, but we heard the news on the radio about that, and when the war started a lot of Igbo came from Biafra as refugees during the war before the border was locked so we rescued them and after the war they went back but I don't know what means they used to cross. I just met them at the border. I don't know if they came to Nigeria and fought, this man that carried me here Keyran he was one of those we rescued at the border and he had all his kids in Cameroon and those that are dead now.¹⁴⁴⁰

The fear of genocide, even when heard on the radio, horrified Igbos in Cameroon just as it did those in Biafra. What Helen highlights is the importance of village relationships for the refugees. The Amagu-Network, which was begun by Mark when he brought his brother and others to find greener economic pastures in Cameroon, was equally important for offering a lifeline during the war. Helen was brought to the interviews for this research by Keyran, and unknown to anyone present she had helped several people, including Keyran, from Amagu get to Tumbe and Tiko. Refugees from Amagu and those they met along the way knew to go to Tumbe because of the prior experiences of their brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts. By 1969, successive defeats reduced Biafra to 7,000 square miles. Isolated into this small space, 7 million Biafrans were sustained by the fear that they were fighting for the survival of their people and that defeat meant genocide.¹⁴⁴¹

¹⁴³⁹Mbu Ettangondop, "Federalism in One-Party State," in *Cameroon: From Federal to a Unitary State, 1961-1972*, eds. Victor Julius Ngoh, (Limbe: Design House, 2004), 130.

¹⁴⁴⁰Helen Ubochi, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, 8 September 2018.

¹⁴⁴¹*Nigeria: How the Civil War May End*, Board of National Estimates, Special Memorandum, CIA. 3 February 1969.

District Officer, Victor Rose, who was stationed in Nigeria from 1956 to 1961, learned of the growing tension towards Igbos in Southern Cameroon during his tour.¹⁴⁴² Reflecting on this time, Rose, like so many, acknowledged that Southern Cameroon joined French Cameroon based on their fear of the Igbos. During the Biafran War, Rose admitted that he was surprised at the change of heart in many Anglophones.¹⁴⁴³ Biafran sympathy was isolated primarily to the Anglophones, while the Cameroon Federal Government continued “to be a faithful supporter of the FMG and to be opposed to any recognition of the rebel government.”¹⁴⁴⁴ The Biafran War ended on 15 January 1970, and to heal the broken nation, General Gowon proclaimed that there would be “no victor, no vanquished.”¹⁴⁴⁵ Nevertheless, there was despair, famine, pain, and the destruction of Eastern Nigeria. While the South-West and North were untouched by the fighting, Eastern Nigeria was decimated.

For Igbos in Cameroon with an entrepreneurial spirit, the conclusion of the war was an opportunity. Festus described the complexity of smuggling goods into Nigeria in the years following the Biafran War:

I did smuggling for 3-years, only I lost my goods in the boat in 1975. Then I settled in this, my brother's home in a place called Tumbe. I was with them for some months. I was smuggling from Cameroon to Nigeria and from Nigeria to Cameroon. I buy some certain contraband in Cameroon. Then maggie was a contraband. There was a time when Tomato, or flour. We buy from Cameroon and sell in Nigeria. you know then the war just ended. Things in the eastern part of Nigeria were scarce. After the civil war, most of the goods entering Igboland were from Cameroon. We sell at Aba then we buy some certain things, that are lacking there and also sell them.

It was very easy to smuggle, but when Nigerian custom catch you, you have to pay the duty of those goods. But there are certain goods like . . . and the rest of it you go to prison. From Tiko to Oran or from Eket. There are certain creeks around. At times we move to Port

¹⁴⁴² *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos, 1968*, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50.

¹⁴⁴³ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos, 1968*, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50.

¹⁴⁴⁴ *Reasons Why West Cameroon Did Not Want to Merge with Nigeria: They Did Not Like the Ibos, 1968*, National Archive of the UK. FCO 65/50.

¹⁴⁴⁵ *Festus, Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo, Owerri, Imo State*, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

Harcourt. Leave from Limbe to Port, or Bonny, through the high sea. I nearly lost my life 5 times. When you move in the sea, that's when you believe that God is marvelous. For 3 years I traveled in the sea.¹⁴⁴⁶

To add to these issues, in 1959 Mt. Cameroon erupted and sent an untold number of boulders and volcanic debris into the sea.¹⁴⁴⁷ Oral history collaborators were no longer the only problem as only the most skilled captains could now navigate the sea.¹⁴⁴⁸ Festus recalled the constant danger that surrounded smuggling following the eruption:

When you are going from Limbe to Nigeria when the sea dries you see some of those stones. So those navigators have mastered the place of those stones. When they are coming to land at the port of Limbe, at the dockyard. They know the position of those rocks. But on that day the driver made a mistake and had to go and climb on top of one of those rocks. So happy he avoided the dockyard, the dockyard is about 700 meters from where our boat struck that stone. Fishermen from the Calabar area, it was the Calabar men who saved our lives. But all our goods were lost. So, after that event, I had no more money, the few waves pushed out we tried to gather them, like these tube creams and containers. Then I had to go to Tiko Town, to inform my mother what happened. I cried, so by then my uncle, the father of Godwin was at Tumbe with the wife. So, I had to tell my mother the only thing I have is to go to Tumbe and see if I can sell it to fishermen. That's how I went to Tumbe. When I sold them, I became a hawker. So, on weekends I go to Tiko and purchase creams and then bring to Tumbe and begin to hawk among the fishermen. I was in Tumbe for approximately 3 months. Then due to my documents expire, my national identity card. So, I had to tell the mother that I am going back to Yaounde where my senior brother is to make another paper. So, I was with them, I went to Yaounde to see if I could make another document. When our goods were lost in Victoria, we went to the police the commissioner said that the issue of emergency documents expires every 3 months to enable us to make another card. So, it was with that card that I was hawking in Tumbe. So, the day that this card expire I was from Tiko going to Tumbe we never knew that the marine officers were at the seaside waiting for traders because they used to ask for identity cards. So, they asked for my identity card, then one looked and saw it expired by one day. If you have yours you go this way, if your paper is not correct you go this way. So, I was so sent in the area where peoples papers are not correct, we were there oo I don't know. They were occupied so I saw if I runaway they will not know. So, what I did I just slipped away and then I run, because from where they caught us to where I was staying was far, they caught us in a place called Cap Cameroon but where I was staying was in Tumbe. So, cap is a different village than Tumbe, its an island. So, when I reached Yaoundé my senior brother had to tell me. He already heard my goods were lost in the sea. I went to see if he could give some

¹⁴⁴⁶ Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo, Owerri, Imo State*, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo, Owerri, Imo State*, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo, Owerri, Imo State*, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

money for me. Then again making another identity card, he told me it was no money. By then he had already married his second wife. It was not like when he had only one wife.¹⁴⁴⁹

Smuggling was not an occupation for the faint of heart, and smugglers rarely left the trade by choice. After three years, Festus gave up smuggling, left with only his life after his boat capsized along with all his goods.¹⁴⁵⁰ Fedelis Ogu recalling his life after the war remarked, “so after the war I now started smuggling goods into Cameroon and sell in the market. I was smuggling cosmetic and electronics and cocoyam’s and beans and yams.”¹⁴⁵¹ After the war, Fedelis was able to lease land in Limbe because his landlord thought highly of him. On the land, he grew oranges, pawpaw, apples, cassava, yam, and cocoyam.¹⁴⁵² They both agreed that when Fedelis returned home, the profits from the money crops would be split. The years after the war were a time of drastic social and personal change as Fedelis stated “I got married there after the war. She was from Nguru and she is an Igbo, we had a son in 1970.”¹⁴⁵³

Emele Titus never wavered from reinventing himself as circumstances dictated, and his commercial acumen allowed him to excel at each opportunity. During the Biafran War, Titus became a shoemaker, which was his most profitable endeavor:

When I was trading in shoes I did not work in the company. I established my own and trained so many Cameroonians because that time during the war it was only I that supplied slippers and sandals to all Cameroon. That what got me going around all Cameroon during the war: Bamileke, Mamfe, Bamenda, and Duala. What you see in this compound here all these houses is evidence of my shoemaking in Cameroon.¹⁴⁵⁴

¹⁴⁴⁹Festus, *Oral Interview: Amagu in Amia Akakbo, Owerri, Imo State*, James Blackwell, 18 August 2018.

¹⁴⁵⁰Fedelis Ogu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhettaforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

¹⁴⁵¹Fedelis Ogu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhettaforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

¹⁴⁵²Fedelis Ogu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhettaforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

¹⁴⁵³Fedelis Ogu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhettaforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

¹⁴⁵⁴Emele Titus, *Oral Interview: Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, May 31, 2016

No Igbo man travels alone, and this was the case for Titus and his uncle. Titus established himself well enough in Cameroon to return to Nigeria to marry, and when his younger brother was 20, he brought him to Cameroon and apprenticed him in a trade: “I have a house there. I built a house there. My brother built a house in Cameroon too, and it was one quarter. He traveled around the whole world from Cameroon, he [went] to France, Poland, China,” so many places.¹⁴⁵⁵ Thus, the journey of a single uncle impacted the lives of untold people, but most importantly his nephews who were empowered to not only become established traders but also travel the world. Titus personifies Igbo circulatory out-migration not merely because of the number of people he brought with him and trained but in how he chose to use his accumulated wealth. Building a large modern home, showing generosity to relatives, and having an impressive car were symbols across Nigeria that a person was successful. Such displays of success were heightened in Igboland because of the ability to leverage wealth to obtain a title.¹⁴⁵⁶ Titus built the most spectacular house for that time in Umuchieze, importing foreign builders to carve the ceiling. It is impossible to enter Umuchieze and not see the house peering above the treetops as a testament to all he accomplished.

The Biafran War transformed the fear of Igbo domination into respect and acceptance between the Anglophones and the Igbos in contrast to the aggressive tactics of the gendarme who routinely abused Anglophones and Igbos alike.¹⁴⁵⁷ Similar to the *Outlook*, the *Cameroon Times* brought into focus the quotidian experience of Igbos in Cameroon in a fashion, focusing on births, deaths, weddings, and social events. On 19 December 19, 1970, Uzoamaka Udoh, the manager of the Confidence Trading Company Ltd in charge of Suzuki sales, wed his wife, a former pupil from

¹⁴⁵⁵Emele Titus, *Oral Interview: Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. May 31, 2016

¹⁴⁵⁶Peter Kilby, “African Labour Productivity Reconsidered,” *The Economic Journal*. Vol. 71, No.282 (Jun 1961): 273-291.

¹⁴⁵⁷Emele Titus, *Oral Interview: Umuchieze, Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. May 31, 2016

the Alor Girls Secondary Grammar School in Onitsha housed at the Victoria Beach Presbyterian Church.¹⁴⁵⁸ As the *Cameroon Times* reported “a long convoy of cars escorted the couple” to their reception, attended by more than 700 guests, at the Victoria Community Hall.¹⁴⁵⁹

Aloysius “Director” Ogu from Umuoho, Owerri Province, was the proprietor and Managing Director of the Umudede Motor Electrical and Battery Charging Service in New Town, Victoria.¹⁴⁶⁰ At 28 years old, he was beloved by both Nigerians and Cameroonians, and his sudden death on 9 January 1971 shocked the entire community.¹⁴⁶¹ Ogu’s father Alfred Anaele Nwaogu was a local councilor in Mpam, Owerri, and Ogu arrived in Cameroon in 1965 after completing courses in Battery Charging and Writing in Onitsha.¹⁴⁶² It is unknown who brought Ogu to Cameroon, but the response to his death shows the profound impact he had while he was alive. Mass was held at the Roman Catholic Mission New Town and included his brothers, S. Nwaoha and Alfred Oguh, among other notable Nigerians and Cameroonians. Francis I. Duru of the *Cameroon Time Printing Press*, who was a close friend of Ogu, fondly remembered his friend, writing he was the “most bossom and intimate friend of mine.”¹⁴⁶³

Biafrans and the Gendarme

While the Anglophone and Igbos found new respect and brotherhood after the Biafran War, the gendarme ushered in a new chapter in the lived experience of Igbos in Cameroon. Elder Akuchie Godwin, who was brought to Limbe by his oldest brother immediately after the Biafran War, reflected on what it meant to be Biafran in Cameroon:

¹⁴⁵⁸ “Confidence Man Weds,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 January 1971.

¹⁴⁵⁹ “Confidence Man Weds,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 January 1971.

¹⁴⁶⁰ “New Town Director Dies,” *Cameroon Times*, 12 January 1971.

¹⁴⁶¹ “New Town Director Dies,” *Cameroon Times*, 12 January 1971.

¹⁴⁶² “New Town Director Dies,” *Cameroon Times*, 12 January 1971.

¹⁴⁶³ “New Town Director Dies,” *Cameroon Times*, 12 January 1971.

It was not an easy journey. Though the English zone love the English-speaking Nigerians. So, they welcome us. I live there probably 22 years. While I was there like I am telling you, it is a little bit like Nigeria, the English-speaking zone in Limbe, Kumba, Tiko, and Mamfe all of the South-West has very much in common with Nigerians and the Igbos. I grew, and I became a businessman in Limbe. Finally, I had a business place in Duala. The French section don't welcome the Igbos like the English-speaking section. The English-speaking section inter-marry with the Igbos. For the French section, it takes time. Even anyone who gets married will surely go back. But the English section stay and live either here or there. They are happy being with us. In my experience, they are nothing like one country. The English section is honest, the French have a double spirit dealing with the Igbos. Even dealing with Western Cameroon. They don't except them as their brothers. They always call us Biafrans. Even the English-speaking Cameroonians they call us Biafrans. For the French, it is a mockery, but for the English, it is nice to answer Biafran.¹⁴⁶⁴

For eight years in Limbe, Elder Godwin and his brother traded in Okrika, importing clothes from America.¹⁴⁶⁵ Trade in secondhand clothes, which expanded across Nigeria in 1957, was initially scorned in the press. The *Pilot* made the following appeal to its readers:

For the information of the powers that be, there are both internal and external branches of the trade. In the former case, known as 'paro' in Lagos, certain people go about collecting secondhand clothes in exchange for either money or other articles like wrist watches, shoes, handbags or portmanteaux. In the latter case, some traders import old clothes into Nigeria. In either case, it seems to matter very little if at all, whether the clothes belonged to lepers or the dead.¹⁴⁶⁶

The apprehension reported in the *Pilot*, although valid, did not end the trade. Okrika was a lucrative trading city for enterprising Igbo men and women, especially those seeking to rebuild their lives after the war.¹⁴⁶⁷ Originally born a Catholic, Elder Godwin lost his personal and business relationship with his brother when he became a Seventh Day Adventist.¹⁴⁶⁸ He took a

¹⁴⁶⁴Elder Akuchie Godwin & Mr. Peace, *Oral Interview, Mbaise Road Junction, Owerri, Imo State*, 16 July 2018.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Elder Akuchie Godwin & Mr. Peace, *Oral Interview, Mbaise Road Junction, Owerri, Imo State*, 16 July 2018.

¹⁴⁶⁶"Trade in Old Clothes," *West African Pilot*, 25 June 1957.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Elder Akuchie Godwin & Mr. Peace, *Oral Interview, Mbaise Road Junction, Owerri, Imo State*, 16 July 2018.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Elder Akuchie Godwin & Mr. Peace, *Oral Interview, Mbaise Road Junction, Owerri, Imo State*, 16 July 2018.

correspondence course in international business and used his newfound knowledge to expand his international import/export business in Limbe and Duala:

But when I grew up, I did international business by correspondence. One Paul Singer, who is a Ph.D. economist taught me international business. So, I started with nothing doing importation and in fact, God blessed me. And it increased and increased. But that country, when they start suspecting you, they will ruin you. One of my business partners they killed him there. They seized 10 containers from me. You know the wealth of 10 containers. I used to import used tires, I used to import spare parts, I used to import used cars in Duala, Cameroon. and I came back here with about 8 to 10 of those big buses and began my transportation company here. The Igbos who went there brought them up gently. Forget about what is happening in this age now. If I am going to Europe and one want to import one container. He doesn't mind using all his money and if you deliver it his brothers will come. So, you can understand such cooperation, except the French-speaking zone¹⁴⁶⁹

In the words of many Igbo collaborators, the gendarme treated them as slaves, offering no respect for men, women, the young, or the old. The gendarme, a pseudo-military force, was constituted by Ahidjo after reunification to bring law and order to Cameroon after the British and Nigerian forces left.¹⁴⁷⁰

In the aftermath of the Biafran War, an increasing number of men and women described as Igbo or alien were labeled as price-fixers, money doublers, or money swindlers.¹⁴⁷¹ The *Cameroon Times* chronicled many of these events throughout the 1970s. For example, on 13 January 1971, the *Cameroon Times* reported that “a big drive to grab alleged swindlers rounded up some Down Beach traders in Victoria.”¹⁴⁷² The police officers were accompanied by price control officers, who went stall by stall cross-checking official prices with listed prices.¹⁴⁷³ The *Cameroon Times* reported “the traders, mostly Ibos, are alleged to have inflated prices on their wares with intent to

¹⁴⁶⁹Elder Akuchie Godwin & Mr. Peace, *Oral Interview, Mbaise Road Junction, Owerri, Imo State*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. 16 July 2018.

¹⁴⁷⁰Walter Gam Nkwi, “Security or Insecurity, the Gendarmerie and Popular Reaction in West Cameroon, 1961-1964,” *African Nebula*, Issue 7, 2014.

¹⁴⁷¹ “Alleged Swindle: More Grabbed, Story Sealed,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 January 1971.

¹⁴⁷² “Alleged Swindle: More Grabbed, Story Sealed,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 January 1971.

¹⁴⁷³ “Alleged Swindle: More Grabbed, Story Sealed,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 January 1971.

defraud innocent customers.”¹⁴⁷⁴ Many of the traders sat in front of their shops, grim-faced with snuff bottles watching their colleagues’ shops be locked.¹⁴⁷⁵ While there were no official statements from law enforcement on the scene nor from the price control officers, the impact of the raid on prominent Igbo traders was obvious. “Among the stores, our reporters saw sealed were some owned by tycoons such as Ottih Brothers Ltd. J. N. Chinweze Brother Company, most of the stores opposite the Council office, shops near Bolingo Customs Agents office, and those near CITEC also received the weight of the law and felt the pinches of fraudulence.”¹⁴⁷⁶ Traders also refused to provide official comments, but the *Cameroon Times* reported an overheard comment, spoken in a low tone, “one only remark that ‘business Cameroon now o dro njoh’ meaning ‘business in Cameroon now is very bad.’”¹⁴⁷⁷ The notion that business in Cameroon had become “very bad” would be a theme throughout the 1970s, and over time it drove many Igbo traders to relocate to Nigeria.¹⁴⁷⁸ However, many chose to remain, finding Cameroon even with its stress to be more lucrative.

Michael Akpan, an Ibibio, was described as a man who had a way with the ladies and a reputation around Obenikang for his financial boasting.¹⁴⁷⁹ On 23 January 1971, the *Cameroon Times*, reported that Akpan was overheard in the Obenikang bar proclaiming, “money was not his trouble.”¹⁴⁸⁰ His outburst led to a comedic ordeal reported is the following passage:

It is alleged that he removed a bundle of one thousand francs notes and showed the women, saying that money was not his trouble. ‘I can close this bar now’ he is alleged to have boasted. It was at the point of closing the bar that the ever vigilant Kumba police pounced on him and allegedly found in his possession 99,000 francs counterfeit notes and 3,700 francs counterfeit coins. He was at once arrested and brought to the Kumba police station

¹⁴⁷⁴“Alleged Swindle: More Grabbed, Story Sealed,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 January 1971.

¹⁴⁷⁵ “Alleged Swindle: More Grabbed, Story Sealed,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 January 1971.

¹⁴⁷⁶“Alleged Swindle: More Grabbed, Story Sealed,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 January 1971.

¹⁴⁷⁷“Alleged Swindle: More Grabbed, Story Sealed,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 January 1971.

¹⁴⁷⁸ “Alleged Swindle: More Grabbed, Story Sealed,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 January 1971.

¹⁴⁷⁹ “Boasting ‘Money Man’ Grabbed with Fake Notes,” *Cameroon Times*, 23 January 1971.

¹⁴⁸⁰“Boasting ‘Money Man’ Grabbed with Fake Notes,” *Cameroon Times*, 23 January 1971.

for detention amidst sobbing women had had flanked him on both sides of the bar.¹⁴⁸¹

Akpa's experience highlights both the deep-seated fears about Ibibio men in Cameroon as well as the change in the Cameroons because of the Biafran War.¹⁴⁸² Akpan's attitude toward women and his boasts that his money had no limit fit with the Cameroonian fear of Igbo men as womanizers. Additionally, it highlights an increase in criminality among certain Ibibio. Counterfeiting was an issue during the colonial period, but the *Cameroon Times* increased its coverage of this crime in addition to money doubling and other scams.¹⁴⁸³ In March 1971, the *Cameroon Times* reported the arrest of eight individuals for counterfeiting; at the time of this incidence, two men, John Itoe from Bakundu and Amos from Eastern Nigeria, had fled the area.¹⁴⁸⁴ The arrest occurred in the Kumba Igbo Quarters in the men's "business house, where fake currency notes amounting to 40,000 FRs. And 200 papers cut to the sizes of 1,000-franc notes were uncovered in their possession."¹⁴⁸⁵ These scams were not limited to Nigerians. As Nigeria rebounded from the Biafran War and Cameroun adjusted to life under the authoritarian Ahidjo, many turned to the black market for goods, work, and access to banned materials.¹⁴⁸⁶ Itoe and Amos were caught a month later in Douala, where they had settled in the "business headquarters" along with other members of their group.¹⁴⁸⁷

Dorothy Oguguo, originally from Ekwedim, Amuzari, was taken to Tiko by Mr. Mmadu Onyebutu when she was ten years old.¹⁴⁸⁸ In Tiko, she learned the seamstress trade from Mr. Onyebutu's wife and was introduced to Benjamin Oguguo, a bicycle repairman, when she was

¹⁴⁸¹"Boasting 'Money Man' Grabbed with Fake Notes," *Cameroon Times*, 23 January 1971.

¹⁴⁸²"Boasting 'Money Man' Grabbed with Fake Notes," *Cameroon Times*, 23 January 1971.

¹⁴⁸³"Six Grabbed with Fake Notes; 2 Flee," *Cameroon Times*, 18 March 1971.

¹⁴⁸⁴"Six Grabbed with Fake Notes; 2 Flee," *Cameroon Times*, 18 March 1971.

¹⁴⁸⁵"Six Grabbed with Fake Notes; 2 Flee," *Cameroon Times*, 18 March 1971.

¹⁴⁸⁶Walter Nkwi, "The Anglophone Problem," in *Cameroon: From a Federal to a Unitary State, 1961-1972*, eds. Victor Julius Ngoh, (Limbe: Design House, 2004), 190.

¹⁴⁸⁷"Fleeing 'Money Doubler' Held," *Cameroon Times*, 1 April 1971.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Dorothy Oguguo, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell, 16 September 2018.

15.¹⁴⁸⁹ Benjamin had been in Southern Cameroon long before its independence and because he was respected by the community, he was elected Imo State Chief Auditor in Tiko and Nigerian Union Officer and Secretary in Mba North-Central.¹⁴⁹⁰ Dorothy reflected, “I was serving my master in Cameroon and so my master said I must get married to Benjamin, that is the way I went.”¹⁴⁹¹ Shortly after the marriage, they had Oke Chukwu and later eight more children.¹⁴⁹²

Dorothy shared a vivid description of the Igbo experience at the hands of the gendarme:

The men like my husband are the ones that paid for the 10,000 [francs]. Then once a man pays for it, he will be free with his family, but at some point, they said women will pay. So, then it became more difficult and they were asking both men and women for immigration deposit of 20,000 [francs]. Somebody with family and children it got to a stage if your child reaches 12 years, he will have immigration deposit. If the immigration come to your house they will start saying ‘presentez-vous’ then they will open your door, if they knock on your door and you open the door, if you have kids from 12 years upwards you will bring your papers, your husband and wife will bring too, my children this one here they will bring their documents plus my husband we were 10 in my house 8 children in my home. We were paying for Cameroon papers until we didn’t have money to buy garri, we paid for immigration until we didn’t have money to pay for a car to bring us home to visit our family. At a time it happened that if we go to Kumba or Limbe or if you go to the market, if they catch you on the way and tell you ‘presentez-vous’ you will raise your hands up and they will bundle you into a car from here to go to police station and they will take you there and you will stay there. The small money you will use to pay for the immigration . . . if you really wanted to pay, the money you will spend when the immigration carries you it will be more than the one you would have paid if you paid for it directly. They will take the money so that is it. They will maltreat you and put you in cell, people that know you or people you love will come and move you from the place and you will pay the thing immediately. There some of them they were deported from there back to Nigeria, you won’t go again at all that is how I saw it, so after that road, they will come to your house, your bathroom and your toilet, any corner where you are.¹⁴⁹³

¹⁴⁸⁹ Dorothy Oguguo, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell, 16 September 2018.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Dorothy Oguguo, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell, 16 September 2018.

¹⁴⁹¹ Dorothy Oguguo, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell, 16 September 2018.

¹⁴⁹² Dorothy Oguguo, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell, 16 September 2018.

¹⁴⁹³ Dorothy Oguguo, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell, 16 September 2018.

Oke Chukwu, the son of Benjamin and Dorothy Oguguo, was born in 1972 in Tiko.¹⁴⁹⁴ He studied at St. Joseph Primary School, and the family attended St. Andrews, the Igbo Church in Tiko.¹⁴⁹⁵ Oke, as the eldest son, reflected on an instance in which he reached the breaking point after witnessing his father's repetitive harassment by the gendarme:

So, my father, I am knowledgeable enough to know what my parents were going through. I saw my father manage each issue. To the extent that I slapped one immigration officer known as Damien, on a very good Saturday morning. My father was eating rice and beans with fresh fish. I am telling you this man came in, no respect at all, said my father should bring his documents. He said, 'wait make I chop.' Damien carried the food, threw it, then I deal with it. That commissioner for public security said Damien must be an idiot if you don't respect elders.¹⁴⁹⁶

Assaulting a gendarme was a drastic step but one born from continued maltreatment. The pressure the gendarme brought upon the Igbo community was more than many could bear. The Igbo Union and the Nigerian Union did all they could to come to the aid of Igbos in Cameroon. Because Benjamin played a central role in the Igbo and Nigerian Union, Oke recalled instances that his family was thrust into conflict with the gendarme:

What the Igbo Union was doing, it was like an umbrella body covering the Igbos in Tiko. Then the Nigerian Union too is a body that covers the Nigerians. Now they have a law governing them the welfare of the Igbos. If you got any problem with Cameroon, they will come and testify that you are a clean person. There was a time I was arrested at Cameroon Bank. My father asked me to go and open the shop. Cameroon immigration stopped me. Where is my tax, I am a student. OK, let me go tell my father. I called the lawyer. He now go to the yard and give my father the information. My father now left his bed, in his loincloth he slept with and singlet. He asked 'come oga where is your tax?' My father said my tax is older than you. That what he reply. That he was in Cameroon before Cameroon got independent. Because he has that immunity, being a chief in Cameroon. My father was a chief. Like in the Igbo Union.¹⁴⁹⁷

¹⁴⁹⁴ Oke Chukwu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell 16 September 2018.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Oke Chukwu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell 16 September 2018.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Oke Chukwu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell 16 September 2018.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Oke Chukwu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell 16 September 2018.

As a leader in the Igbo Union, Benjamin was not only responsible for his family, but he was also often called upon to speak on behalf of the Igbo community, especially during grave events. One such event was the kidnapping of several Igbo girls in Cameroon:

There was a time when 7 Igbos was kidnapped and trafficked to Kumba. My father was the one that represented the Nigerian council in Buea in the court. That case was around 9 a.m. that same day they decided that matter at 11 pm. My father was in the court until 2 a.m., it was the council's car that brought my father back to Tiko. My father was the one who made the Cameroon government recover those girls and send them back to their people. some of them were from Oguta. About 3 of them were pregnant.¹⁴⁹⁸

The Igbo Union held enough influence to come to the aid of kidnapped members, but that same influence did not always extend to protecting the community from unfettered gendarme brutality. The situation reached such a heightened state that the Nigeria Council finally arrived in Tiko to inform the community about their rights as Nigerian citizens:

The Igbo Union was protecting the interests of the Igbos, I can remember when this immigration got to the worse level. Nigerian Council drove down to Tiko, all of us come gather and tell them of our problem. There I learned no Cameroonian authority has the right to seize Nigerian passport, but they will seize your passport. Council said who is that person, he has no right to seize your passport. As council leaves the next morning, they flogged me. Cameroon is my country, but things began to change. And this change began to happen when they started to do this multi-partisan. They don't understand democracy very well. Cameroon is the kind of country where they will hold election, and no one will know.¹⁴⁹⁹

The constant pressure from the gendarme and the rising cost of residential permits forced Oke Chukwu to leave Tiko, the place he openly admitted was his home. The only issue blocking his obtaining citizenship was that both his parents were Nigerians.¹⁵⁰⁰ While many were motivated to

¹⁴⁹⁸Oke Chukwu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell 16 September 2018.

¹⁴⁹⁹Oke Chukwu, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Amuzari, Isiala Mbano (LGA) Imo State, Nigeria*, James Blackwell 16 September 2018.

¹⁵⁰⁰Elder Akuchie Godwin & Mr. Peace, *Oral Interview, Mbaise Road Junction, Owerri, Imo State*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. 16 July 2018.

leave because of the shifting political climate, another group of men found it more convenient to remain well into old age.

However, the responsibility being the oldest son drew many Igbo men home before old age. Oral history collaborators interviewed for this research uniformly noted that no man wants to die in a strange land, and when they can choose, many come home only when their time remaining appears brief. Elder Godwin provided insight into why so many Igbo men chose to remain in Cameroon even under the pressure of the gendarme:

I have brothers who went there long, and they refuse to come back. They like there, the unity the cooperation. Whether you have money, you sit in the joint and eat and drink beer. You will drink until you can't go home. You will not worry who will pay. There are joints, if you go they will call you to eat. So, some of our brothers who have been there for long. They don't ask you how many times we have fed you. Only recently have they started building houses with bricks, they don't plan for age. The people ruling them, ruling all of us, classify all of us as slaves.¹⁵⁰¹

Thus, the attractiveness of a good time at any point of the day kept many Igbo men in Cameroon. It helps that they can extend their commercial arm wider and more comfortably in Cameroon than they could in Nigeria. Igbo men benefited from the cultural and economic openness offered in Cameroon, a situation rooted in the experiences of the first migrants who arrived.

The Bribery Trial of Michael Okafor

The gendarme created a pervasive atmosphere of abuse, which conditioned many Nigerians and Anglophones to conclude that it was easier to bribe them than to become victims of their assaults. Nevertheless, bribery was problematic as it had the potential of resulting in legal trouble for the briber or the gendarme. The bribery trial of Michael Okafor, the Assistant Manager of the Confidence Trading Company Ltd. Victoria, was extensively chronicled in the *Cameroon Times* and best exemplifies this conundrum. It is not clear when Okafor arrived in Southern Cameroon,

¹⁵⁰¹Elder Akuchie Godwin & Mr. Peace, *Oral Interview, Mbaise Road Junction, Owerri, Imo State*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. 16 July 2018.

but in his own words, he admitted to trading in motorbikes from 1955 to 1959.¹⁵⁰² In 1959 he established his own business in Bamenda, which last until 1964 when he merged with Mr. Akanegbu and the Confidence Trading Stores to form the Confidence Trading Company Ltd, which subsequently had branches in Victoria, Bamenda, Mamfe, Kumba and Douala.¹⁵⁰³ Okafor noted that by the time of the trial, both he and Akanegbu had been in business together in Cameroon for more than 20 years.¹⁵⁰⁴

The *Cameroon Times* provided detailed coverage, spanning several months, of the initial bribe and subsequent court case. Regarding the purpose of the bribe, the *Cameroon Times* was able to obtain the following comment from Captain Nsom-Eyenga:

The bribe he said was to enable them to release the manager of Confidence Trading Company, Mr. Akanegbu now detained in Buea. It was also to enable them to open the sealed Confidence stores and offices so that all the goods are sold, to destroy documents and to allow them to have access to their hitherto blocked saving in banks. Michael Okafor, the Captain said, denied that he was directed by Mr. Akanegbu to bribe the gendarmes—it was his own initiative.¹⁵⁰⁵

The process of the bribe, while comedic, highlights the culture of bribery, which had become normalized in the 1970s in Cameroon. Okafor's bribery charges show the anxiety inherent in the offering of a bribe. Additional facts revealed during the trial reinforce the pressure that Nigerians were under to offer bribes as well as the danger they faced when doing so. The events which led Okafor to offer the bribe took place between the 9 and 10 February 1971.¹⁵⁰⁶ The initial statement released to the *Cameroon Times* indicated that Okafor did the following after his arrest at the Confidence Trading Company:

¹⁵⁰² "How much money do you keep at home-Okafor?" *Cameroon Times*, 10 August 1971.

¹⁵⁰³ "How much money do you keep at home-Okafor?" *Cameroon Times*, 10 August 1971.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Okafor offered to "half a million francs and two Suzuki motorcycles" to gendarme officers Captain Nsom-Eyenga Alain Joachim, Commandant Marechal des Logis Ndjock Fils Parfait and Sous Commandant Bouba Sambo. The bribe was proposed in order to secure the release of the Okafor's boss, who was the Manager of the Confidence Trading Company Ltd, Victoria, detained at Buea.

¹⁵⁰⁵ "556,000 frs., Suzukis Bribe Offer to Gendarmes Rejected," *Cameroon Times*, 18 February 1971.

¹⁵⁰⁶ "556,000 frs., Suzukis Bribe Offer to Gendarmes Rejected," *Cameroon Times*, 18 February 1971.

Sent Sylvester Okoye—‘his boy’ to them at home to come and drink in bar. As law officers, they refused to go to the bar. Later Okafor came with Sylvester Okoye to see the two ‘chefs’—Njock and Bouba at home, invited them out for a drink but they refused. Very insistent, Okafor sent Okoye ‘his boy’ with 2,000 francs for the two ‘chefs’ as money for drinks. He said he would find time to meet them for a certain discussion. Again the ‘chefs’ turned the offer down. On several occasions, Captain Nsom-Eyenga revealed Okafor has come to ‘see me’ but he was refused. On February 10, 1971, Okafor came all out—a ‘Bingo’ magazine under his armpit and two Suzukis ‘100.’ In the Bingo magazine was the 556,000 francs intended for him and one Suzuki for each of the two ‘chefs.’ Okafor, he went on, admitted in writing that the money and Suzukis were to enable them to release ‘his chief,’ Mr. Akanegbu to open their stores and offices and allow them to sell all their goods and also to enable them to have access to their blocked saving in the banks. At this stage, the Captain said, he asked Okafor whether he knew that it was an offence against the law and he admitted and said he had given it with a ‘good spirit.’¹⁵⁰⁷

The initial gendarme investigation into the Confidence Trading Company was related to an allegation of swindling, which amounted to fraud. Swindling was rampant in Cameroon and often impacted customers most severely. Moreover, the case was notable because it was the first time the gendarme investigated swindling. Added government pressure ensured the case was not only straightforward but would also come to the expected end. It was reported that swindling was rampant among importers because they received “two kinds of ‘blank notes’ from their overseas suppliers.”¹⁵⁰⁸ These invoices were already stamped and signed, allowing importers to “embark on filling in any prices they deem necessary.”¹⁵⁰⁹ Swindlers used imported “tying machines” to fill out the documents correctly. Thus, it was the typewriters and duplicate invoices that Okafor wanted to destroy because without such evidence, it would be difficult for the gendarme to prove their case.

On 8 June 1971, Justice V.R. Dervish of in the Buea High Court denied Okafor, Okoye, and Callistus Atem bail.¹⁵¹⁰ Defense Barrister Mrs. M. N. Weledji, who represented the accused

¹⁵⁰⁷“556,000 frs., Suzukis Bribe Offer to Gendarmes Rejected,” *Cameroon Times*, 18 February 1971.

¹⁵⁰⁸“556,000 frs., Suzukis Bribe Offer to Gendarmes Rejected,” *Cameroon Times*, 18 February 1971.

¹⁵⁰⁹“556,000 frs., Suzukis Bribe Offer to Gendarmes Rejected,” *Cameroon Times*, 18 February 1971.

¹⁵¹⁰ “That 556,000 frs bribe case: Bail Refused,” *Cameroon Times*, 8 June 1971.

along with lead Defense Barrister Dr. P. Y. Ntamar, countered the denial of bail as reported in the *Cameroon Times*.¹⁵¹¹ Weledji stated that “Michael Okafor has landed property of about five million francs, he is able to get two Cameroonians with landed properties as sureties to him and also willing to surrender his passport to the authorities.”¹⁵¹² The amount of property Okafor had in Cameroon along with his assurance of Anglophone financial support highlights the strong economic position of both the Confidence Trading Company and Okafor himself. The latter did not have an impact on Justice Dervish who summarily denied Okafor bail, citing the severity of his crimes.¹⁵¹³ Weledji led a passionate bail defense for Okoye, which provides valuable insights into his parentage:

He was formally a prosecution witness and that at a certain state of the case he was termed ‘a hostile witness’ and later charged as an accessory in the offence. Okoye, she said is not directly involved in the case not knowing the judgement the court will arrive at, she said, it will not be right for him to be kept in custody indefinitely. The father of Okoye, she went on, is a Nigerians and the mother a Cameroonian and that he was born in Cameroon.¹⁵¹⁴

O. M. Inglis, the lead prosecutor, “objected to the bail saying that Okoye played a very active role in the offense for which they will be tried. He maintained that Okoye is a Nigerian as he has not declared his nationality.”¹⁵¹⁵ Inglis’ claim that Okoye had “not declared his nationality” highlights a strong anti-Nigerian sentiment that ran throughout the case. Further, Inglis’ assertion indicates that if Okoye had declared his “nationality,” then he would not only be provided bail but would have perhaps not been swept up in the case. Because his mother was Cameroonian, Okoye had access to citizenship and, thus, all the protections it afforded.

¹⁵¹¹ “That 556,000 frs bribe case: Bail Refused,” *Cameroon Times*, 8 June 1971.

¹⁵¹² “That 556,000 frs bribe case: Bail Refused,” *Cameroon Times*, 8 June 1971.

¹⁵¹³ “That 556,000 frs bribe case: Bail Refused,” *Cameroon Times*, 8 June 1971.

¹⁵¹⁴ “That 556,000 frs bribe case: Bail Refused,” *Cameroon Times*, 8 June 1971.

¹⁵¹⁵ “That 556,000 frs bribe case: Bail Refused,” *Cameroon Times*, 8 June 1971.

The bribery case took an unexpected turn when Okafor was allowed to take the stand. His testimony not only put the impetus for the bribe on the gendarme but also pointed to the anti-Nigerian undertone of the case.¹⁵¹⁶ Okafor recounted that after he went home to collect funds, he “moved to Bouba’s house in Bota.”¹⁵¹⁷ At which point Okafor “handed the money to them [Bouba and Njock] (300,000 FRS.) in Bouba room.”¹⁵¹⁸ As the money was exchanged, Okafor explained that “Bouba advised that since the Suzukis were not forthcoming, he should give them an equivalent of the Suzukis in cash. [Okafor] then gave them 256,000 FRS. CFA, the cost of two Suzukis.”¹⁵¹⁹ The latter interaction asserts that it was the gendarme who initiated not only the bribe but also its purpose.¹⁵²⁰ As Okafor was leaving the room, Njock noted that the money would be used to buy the requested Suzukis.¹⁵²¹

On 10 February, Njock, Bouba, and a third unidentified gendarme arrived at the Confidence Trading Offices to purchase their bikes. As Okafor was preparing the invoices, Bouba picked up two additional helmets and asked that Okafor “hurry up with the invoices because a man through whom they wished to send the Suzukis to their brother in Edea was waiting.” When Okafor inquired about the status of the 256,000 FRS, Njock informed him: “they had decided to give the whole amount to the Captain [Nsom] since he wanted one million francs.”¹⁵²² This revelation led to an argument, which was overheard by a third party.¹⁵²³

Later that night at approximately 9:30, Okafor arrived at the Miramare Hotel for a drink, where he met Captain Nsom and Major Obama along with Okoye and Etem, all of whom were

¹⁵¹⁶ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵¹⁷ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵¹⁸ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵¹⁹ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵²⁰ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵²¹ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵²² “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵²³ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

drinking champagne together.¹⁵²⁴ Captain Nsom “offered [Okafor] a seat near him and served him with Champagne. Unfortunately [Okafor] said that which was put in his glass was the dregs in the bottle and the captain pushed the empty bottle towards him and then order for a new bottle costing 4,500 FRS. CFA.”¹⁵²⁵ Afterward Captain Nsom “ordered three plates of meals” and Okafor, Major Obama, and two unidentified women transitioned to the back room to eat. Okafor commented that the party “began to speak in French which he does not understand so he told them that he was no longer interested in the meals and left for the bar.”¹⁵²⁶ Okafor asserted that “later on, Captain Nsom came out with some papers which he (Nsom) folded and pushed into ‘my coat pocket.’ When he later removed the paper, he found that they were bills for champagne and meals totaling 7,360 francs. He hadn’t enough money on him, so he went to his house and brought more money with which he settled the bill.”¹⁵²⁷

As Captain Nsom left Miramare Hotel near midnight, he invited Okafor to come to the Brigade the next day to finalize their agreement.¹⁵²⁸ When Okafor arrived, Bouba and Njock took him to Bouba’s house where Captain Nsom was waiting.¹⁵²⁹ Okafor testified that once in a back bedroom, “the captain began by saying he had done several business [sic] with Nigerian, but they had always let him down. He said his (Captains) head was as big as the house in which they were sitting and his ears as large as the field and that he was very powerful in the night.”¹⁵³⁰ Okafor then continued:

the captain then told him that he (captain) was going to use him as an example and ordered Bouba to get a pen and paper and give him (Okafor). When they were brought and handed to him the captain ordered that he should write down whatever Bouba would tell him and he did so. Later, Bouba narrated how he had given a bribe to them in order to release

¹⁵²⁴ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵²⁵ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵²⁶ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵²⁷ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵²⁸ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵²⁹ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵³⁰ “That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony,” *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

Akanegbu, open stores, etc. and he wrote that down. He said after this he was detained from that time.¹⁵³¹

Okafor's testimony threw the case into disarray and forced Captain Nsom to defend himself publicly regarding the Miramare Hotel bill.¹⁵³² In the *Cameroon Times*, Captain Nsom asserted that he had, in fact, paid his own bill as any proper gendarme would have done.¹⁵³³ Moreover, Okafor's testimony sheds light on how the gendarme used intimidation and anti-Nigerian prejudice to solicit bribes. Mr. Oliver M. Inglis, the leading prosecutor, did not address many of the claims in Okafor's testimony, instead questioning why Okafor kept so much money in his house.¹⁵³⁴ Okafor responded, "That since every place was locked up he kept all the money received from sales."¹⁵³⁵ Inglis then asked how much money Confidence Trading Company could make in a day, to which Okafor responded, "sometimes it is more than one million francs in cash."¹⁵³⁶ Inglis pushed further about the purpose of keeping so much cash in his house to which Okafor responded "[we] are importers and [our] company also buys locally and sells."¹⁵³⁷ The latter response is vital for two reasons: First, it feeds into Cameroonian anger towards Nigerians, who at times refused to use Cameroonian banks, opting instead to keep money in their homes and physically take the money back to Nigeria. Second, it highlights the amount of wealth that successful businessmen could accumulate in Cameroon. One million francs a day from one shop was a great deal of money in 1971 and an even more considerable amount in post-war Nigeria.

Okafor's testimony concluded the case, which at this point had spanned several months. In the Buea High Court, Inglis "submitted that the evidence of [the] accused persons and their witness

¹⁵³¹"That Bribery Case; Okafor Ends Testimony," *Cameroon Times*, 7 August 1971.

¹⁵³² "How much money do you keep at home-Okafor?" *Cameroon Times*, 10 August 1971.

¹⁵³³ "How much money do you keep at home-Okafor?" *Cameroon Times*, 10 August 1971.

¹⁵³⁴ "How much money do you keep at home-Okafor?" *Cameroon Times*, 10 August 1971.

¹⁵³⁵ "How much money do you keep at home-Okafor?" *Cameroon Times*, 10 August 1971.

¹⁵³⁶ "How much money do you keep at home-Okafor?" *Cameroon Times*, 10 August 1971.

¹⁵³⁷"How much money do you keep at home-Okafor?" *Cameroon Times*, 10 August 1971.

was a complete fabrication.”¹⁵³⁸ Countering this assertion, Dr. P. Y. Ntamark, the lead defense barrister, and Mrs. Weledji argued that “the gendarmes involved in the case should be considered as accomplices.”¹⁵³⁹ Ntamark, in an eloquent closing statement, enumerated numerous cases where “a giver of a bribe may be a victim or an accomplice according to the circumstances of the case.”¹⁵⁴⁰ These cases situate the Okafor Bribery Case in a context highlighting the pervasive depth of corruptive abuse within the gendarme.

On Wednesday, 18 August 1971, Chief Justice Sam L. M. Endeley, who presided over the High Court of Buea, sentenced Okafor “to five years imprisonment with hard labour.”¹⁵⁴¹ Okoye and Calistus Atem “were each sentenced to nine months imprisonment but suspended for three years.”¹⁵⁴² In his closing statement, Chief Justice Endeley did not chastise the gendarme for their role in the case but instead alluded to their youth, observing:

that the gendarmes lied about the press conference which they gave but ascribed this to their being youthful and did not know to what extent the press conference would expose them but he said even though they lied about this it had nothing to do with the credibility of their evidence pertaining to [the] charge. He said he finds that the evidence as presented by the prosecution was liable.¹⁵⁴³

Southern Cameroon offered Igbo traders opportunities, which many would have found challenging to attain in Nigeria, especially at Eastern Nigeria as it rebuilt itself following the Biafran War. While gendarme pressure and abuses forced many to return home or change their

¹⁵³⁸ Judgement Tuesday in ‘Marathon Trial’: Prosecution says Defense Fabricated; Defense says Gendarmes were accomplices,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 August 1971.

¹⁵³⁹ Judgement Tuesday in ‘Marathon Trial’: Prosecution says Defense Fabricated; Defense says Gendarmes were accomplices,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 August 1971.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Judgement Tuesday in ‘Marathon Trial’: Prosecution says Defense Fabricated; Defense says Gendarmes were accomplices,” *Cameroon Times*, 14 August 1971.

¹⁵⁴¹ “End of Marathon Trial: Okafor Jailed 5 yrs, 2 Others Ger Suspended Terms,” *Cameroon Times*, 19 August 1971.

¹⁵⁴² “End of Marathon Trial: Okafor Jailed 5 yrs, 2 Others Ger Suspended Terms,” *Cameroon Times*, 19 August 1971.

¹⁵⁴³ “End of Marathon Trial: Okafor Jailed 5 yrs, 2 Others Ger Suspended Terms,” *Cameroon Times*, 19 August 1971.

means of operation, no incident drove Igbos from Cameroon at a higher rate than the constant tension between the FMG and Cameroun over the Bakassi Peninsula.¹⁵⁴⁴ In June 1975 General Gowon and Ahidjo signed the Maroua Declaration, which confirmed Nigeria's secession of substantial land in the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroun. It was rumored that General Gowon made this concession because of Cameroon's support for the FMG during the Biafran War.¹⁵⁴⁵ Ahidjo allowed Gowon to station soldiers in Jabane to surveil Biafran forces and restrict supplies from reaching Calabar.¹⁵⁴⁶ It is worth noting that France and several of its former colonies recognized and provided aid to Biafra, in large part because of the country's desire to obtain a foothold in Eastern Nigeria's growing oil industry.¹⁵⁴⁷ Scholars have argued that Ahidjo supported FMG because of his fear of an Anglophone uprising along with his surprise for the sympathy Anglophones showed to Biafran refugees.¹⁵⁴⁸ Elder Godwin navigated the pressures of life in Cameroon well enough to establish himself as a prominent businessman, but he recalled how the Bakassi incident, more than any other, precipitated his return to Nigeria:

I came back because they started inspecting our goods for guns and ammunition because of the Bakassi Peninsula issue. They will keep our goods for inspection and the goods will spoil. Like there was a time I imported two 40-foot containers of tomato from Italy. That tomato stayed 8 months and got bad. So, the insurance could not pay. So, what of the two 40-foot containers, the country could not pay. So, I decided to leave. Wrappers would stay and turn to dust. I have a very nice warehouse in Duala. I have my children trained up and I am happy.¹⁵⁴⁹

¹⁵⁴⁴ "End of Marathon Trial: Okafor Jailed 5 yrs, 2 Others Ger Suspended Terms," *Cameroon Times*, 19 August 1971.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Chinyere Blessing Maduka, *National Interest and Foreign Policy: A Case Study of Nigeria-Cameroon Border Crisis (Bakassi Peninsula) 1975-2007*, Thesis, Department of History & International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, (September 2008), 21; Hilary V. Lukong, *The Cameroon-Nigeria Border Dispute: Management and Resolution, 1981-2011*, (Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing, 2011), 23.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Maduka, *National Interest and Foreign Policy*

¹⁵⁴⁷ Lukong, *The Cameroon-Nigeria Border Dispute*

¹⁵⁴⁸ Carlson Anyangwe, *Imperialistic Politics in Cameroon: Resistance & the Inception of the Restoration of the Statehood of Southern Cameroons*, (Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing, 2008), 74.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Elder Akuchie Godwin & Mr. Peace, *Oral Interview, Mbaise Road Junction, Owerri, Imo State*, James K. Blackwell, Jr. 16 July 2018.

The gendarme was a constant reminder to the Igbos and Anglophone Cameroonians of the oppressive nature of the Ahidjo state and the terror they faced because of it. In Cameroon after the Biafran war, Igbos welcomed being called Biafrans because of what it represented and the power it held. It symbolized perseverance and survival. Tested under the gendarme in newfound ways, Igbos endured life in Cameroon, carving out a home where they saw fit.

Conclusion

This chapter explores how the Igbo community adapted to both domestic and international upheavals. The natural fertility of Southern Cameroon drew Igbo migrants from far and wide in a search for “greener pastures.” Igbo traders and laborers found economic freedom and became an integral part of both the domestic Cameroonian and international trade. The sheer presence of Igbo traders generated deep-rooted anxiety of Igbo domination, which propelled Southern Cameroon into the waiting arms of the Republic of Cameroon. However, the dream of a united utopian Cameroon under its precolonial boundary remained a dream as the harsh realities of Francophone domination quickly set in. Cameroonian secession did not lead to a mass exodus of Igbos from Cameroon; instead, it was an exodus into trading. Igbos were less concerned about the negative rhetoric surrounding their perceived domination of Southern Cameroon but focused instead on how to become better traders. The sympathy many felt for the plight of Igbos during the Biafran War played a significant role in transforming the Igbo image in Cameroon. A warm relationship between Anglophones and Biafrans gave way to the oppression of the Francophones, specifically the gendarme. While Williams, Endeley, and Foncha used words, the Gendarme arrived with the full support of the state. Still, in the face of such difficulties, Igbos in Cameroon were no longer in search of “greener pastures” but were reaping them.

CONCLUSION:
“DUTY-FREE:” THE MODERN IGBO PRESENCE AND TRADE DIASPORA IN
CAMEROON

Undoubtedly, Imo State contains the highest rural population density in Tropical Africa. The average rural population density is everywhere above 625 person per square kilometer. For Eastern Nigeria (as a region) was famed for large human concentrations. It is of course noteworthy that the highest known divisional densities per square mile were found in the following divisions from Imo State: Orlu 1,906, Mbaise 1,661, Okigwe 1,268 and Owerri 724. In the light of the above fact, there is no doubt that the state overflows with human resources. There are abundant skilled and unskilled labour. Opportunities for manpower development remain unlimited.¹⁵⁵⁰

Historian, Aman Alban Acholonu published, *Look at Imo*, in 1976. Within its pages, he shows the reader that 16-years after Nigerian independence, Imo State still suffered from the same land pressures it did during its colonial days. However, *Look at Imo*, was smartly positioned Imo State as the heartbeat of Nigeria because of its abundance of people. *Look at Imo*, drew attention to Imo State’s abundance of athletes, entertainers, and intellectuals, which became a marker of its domestic and international distinction. Nwozuzu “Killiwe” Nwachukwu, was heralded as Imo States superman.¹⁵⁵¹ Dick Tiger, in the 1960s, was both the world middleweight and lightweight champion.¹⁵⁵² Christian Ohiri, was heralded as the 1960 “Olympic Star.”¹⁵⁵³ Noticeable musicians and bands such as Israel Nwoba of Atomic 8, and Jona Eze and Patrick Udensi of the Strangers Band of Owerri were central figures in the music scene.¹⁵⁵⁴ While Imo State boasted illustrious musicians and athletes, its most significant export remained as it had been during the colonial era its laborers, petty traders, and established large scale entrepreneurs. In the post-colonial era, Igbo

¹⁵⁵⁰Aman Alban Acholonu, *Look at Imo State*, (Mbaise: Ama Eze Nwa Joint Enterprises, 1976), 15-16.

¹⁵⁵¹ Acholonu, *Look at Imo State*, 16.

¹⁵⁵²Adeyinka Makinde, *Dick Tiger: The Life and Times of a Boxing Immortal*, (Tarentum, PA: World Association Publishers, 2004)

¹⁵⁵³Acholonu, *Look at Imo State*, 16.

¹⁵⁵⁴Acholonu, *Look at Imo State*, 16.

migration between Eastern Nigeria and West Cameroon was sustained because of its generational effectiveness in alleviating the pressure Igbos placed on the land in Eastern Nigeria.

Cameroon, regardless of stranger anxiety, Ahidjo authoritarianism, or gendarme abuses, offered Igbo migrants opportunities that continue to prove challenging to attain in Nigeria. The latter difficulty is a string that extends between both the colonial and post-colonial era. Igbos maximized the opportunities that fell before them and, in doing so, created new lives and engrained themselves economically and socially in their new home. However, within the long *durée* of the history of the Bight of Biafra, Bakassi Peninsula and along the Cross River, this was nothing new. Igbos and Ibibios traded with cities and communities in Cameroon before colonialism as well as between German, French, and British administrations.

“Igbo Migration, Entrepreneurship and the Creation of the Igbo Scare,” began by chronicling the arrival of Igbo laborers to Kamerun as plantation laborers in 1916 when British and French forces conquered the colony. In the 20th century history of extended Igbo out-migration, 1916 is a watershed moment because it represents the first moment of extended migration outside the confines of Igboland, regardless of socioeconomic level. Thus, from 1916, Igbos and Ibibios began arriving in Kamerun in ever-increasing numbers. In Kamerun, Igbos and Ibibios were joined by Hausas and Yoruba’s whom all engaged in various degrees of labor and trade. However, the Igbo and Ibibio numerical advantage, proximity to Southern Cameroon, along with their ability to operate as both traders and laborers, allowed them to establish a firm economic footing that exists into the present.

Fernando Po offered a diverging path for Igbos, and its legality increased the danger of an already perilous journey. The Igbo odyssey to Fernando Po holds all the signs of the dangers of migrations, which Nigerians experienced decades later when crossing the Sahara in an attempt to

reach Europe. Men who traveled to Fernando Po under the guise of free labor could fall victim to predatory contracts, while women who traveled for love could find themselves trapped into a cycle of prostitution. Migration to Fernando Po was operated by a union between criminal middlemen in tandem British and Spanish political officials, in drawing attention to this cartel, the chapter showed how these added pressures positioned Southern Cameroon as the best opportunity for Igbo migration. The Tom Shots narrative offered a window not only into Igbo and Ibibio fishermen, but it provided a glimpse into life and trade, which reached deep into the pre-colonial era. The Rio del Rey and Bakassi Peninsula became politized by Cameroun and Nigeria's dictatorial regimes only when oil made it advantageous to their pockets. Nevertheless, for those fishermen, the Rio de Rey and Bakassi Peninsula represented their livelihood unbound by borderers and political conviction.

Igbos and Ibibios experienced animosity in response to their economic acumen. However, this study has shown that this was not isolated to Nigeria. In Northern Nigeria, South-West Nigeria, and even in Eastern Nigeria, among minority ethnic groups, Igbos were viewed as a singular oppressive force, championed by Nnamdi Azikiwe, that sought economic power and totalitarian political control following independence. Igbos were despised to such a degree that many sought to call them imperialists who viewed Southern Cameroon as an Igbo backyard. Stranger anxiety was exploited throughout the 1950s, culminating most strikingly in the 1961 Plebiscite. Rather than ending the Igbo experience in 1961, this study pushed forward and showed how, during the Biafran War, Igbos went from despised stranger to embraced brother/sister. Igbos, instead of merely being Nigerian, became Biafran. The history of Igbo labor migration and trade between Eastern Nigeria and West Cameroon did not end in 1975 but is sustained to the present with similarities and differences which this study has brought forth. This conclusion provides space to bring this dissertation, in its present state, to a close.

In the post-colonial era, Nigeria and Cameroon went through a multitude of political, social, and economic upheavals caused by a series of internal and external factors. Nigeria experienced a series of military coups: January 1966, July 1966, 1975 Palace coup, and the 1976 Dimka Coup.¹⁵⁵⁵ These coups destabilized Nigeria damaging its economy and creating a refugee crisis that cast Nigerians across the globe. Situated within the coups was 1967-1970, Biafran War.¹⁵⁵⁶

Western Cameroon, while initially incorporated as an equal partner, saw its regional autonomy progressively eroded under the dictatorship of Ahmadou Ahidjo. In 1965, Ahidjo abolished all political parties, except his own and centralized power, while limited previously constitutionally protected freedoms.¹⁵⁵⁷ Under the umbrella of these dramatic domestic, regional, and global changes are the continued narrative of Igbo migrants, who, through the decades, have continued to live, work, and trade between Nigeria and Cameroon.

The collapse of the Nigerian economy in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s propelled a new wave of Igbo migration. The new wave of migrants used established familial and communal networks though more consistently, they held no primary intention of returning home. During the 1980s, the economies of both Nigeria and Cameroon struggled to find footing.¹⁵⁵⁸ Nigeria's economy which once stood on its diversity, had shrunk to a mono-economy dependent on oil. Oral history collaborators noted that during the late 1970s and 1980s, the *Naira* was at times more robust than the Cameroonian *West African Franc*, which enabled traders to purchase goods for lower prices in Cameroon to sell in Nigeria. Such financial movement between borders was

¹⁵⁵⁵ Max Siollun, *Oil, Politics and Violence: Nigeria's Military Coup Culture* (1966-1976), (New York: Algora, 2009).

¹⁵⁵⁶ Siollun, *Oil, Politics and Violence*

¹⁵⁵⁷ J.F. Bayart, "The Birth of the Ahidjo Regime," in *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon under Ahmadu Ahidjo*, eds. Richard Joseph, (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978), 60.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Erika A. Albaugh, "An Autocrat's Toolkit: Adaption and Manipulation in 'Democratic' Cameroon," *Democratization*, 18:2 (April 2011): 388-414.

possible because France held a tight economic grip over the *WAF* over its former colonies. Igbo traders undercut France's economic dominance in a multitude of fashions, with one, in particular, being through secondhand trade-in motor parts. France imported motor parts under rigid regulations, which uplifted the French economy at the plight of the Cameroonian economy. Using second motor parts, Igbo traders were able to create and dominate the secondhand motor part market. Under different Nigerian dictatorships, the importation of goods such as cosmetics, tin tomato, and Chinese rice were banned. Igbo traders circumnavigated these regulations by purchasing the goods in Cameroon and informally bringing them into Nigeria.¹⁵⁵⁹

In 1966, Ahidjo abolished all other political parties except the Cameroon National Union (CNU), and centralized power to crush any possible opposition to his dictatorial reign. In 1972, Ahidjo issued a new constitution that ended the autonomy of West Cameroon, creating from the former federal state a unitary state.¹⁵⁶⁰ On 4 November 1982, Ahidjo left Cameroon for medical treatment and appointed his protégé Paul Biya to administer in his place, a position which currently holds.¹⁵⁶¹

In the 1970s and 1980s, the number of Nigerian migrants in Cameroon increased exponentially. In the 1970s, it became routine for Nigerian ambassadors and foreign affairs officers to send stern letters to Cameroon officials because Nigerian nationals were being mistreated and arrested.¹⁵⁶² In the 1980s, as many as 80-million Nigerians were in Cameroon.¹⁵⁶³ Shortly after Biya took control, he implemented his New Deal policy, which initially uplifted specific sectors of Cameroon's economy. The latter was rooted in increased revenue from oil, which jumped from

¹⁵⁵⁹ Albaugh, "An Autocrat's Toolkit

¹⁵⁶⁰ Peter Tse Angwafo, *Cameroons Predicaments*, (Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing, 2014), 69

¹⁵⁶¹ Joseph Takougang, "The Demise of Biya's New Deal in Cameroon, 1982-1992," in *The Leadership Challenge in Africa: Cameroon Under Paul Biya*, eds. John Mukum Mbaku and Joseph Takougang, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), 97.

¹⁵⁶² Lukong, *The Cameroon-Nigeria Border Dispute*, 30.

¹⁵⁶³ Lukong, *The Cameroon-Nigeria Border Dispute*, 30.

5% to 40% of the national revenue. Oil dependency increased agricultural subsidies and raised the prices of crops, which benefited farmers.¹⁵⁶⁴ The massive movement of Nigerians between Cameroon and Nigeria challenged the regulation of official borders. In the 1980s, the Cameroonian economy experienced a drastic downturn, similar to what occurred in Nigeria.¹⁵⁶⁵ Igbo traders, while impacted by the downturn, were able to overcome the downturn because they were not dependent on the Cameroonian state. Still, their ability to operate in both spaces and their stranger-ness brought increase abuse at the hands of the gendarme.

Casmen Ihekweba, a trader from Umunumo Ihhetteaforukwu, reflected on the impetus, which drove him to seek work in Cameroun in the 1980s. In doing so he referenced the role that the fall of Nigeria's economy in the 1980s had on his impetus to seek work in Cameroun.

The point, the area is that we are the indigene. They regard us as the indigene of Cameroon, I stay at Moliwe, I stay at Moliwe three years, then left I stay at Mutengene, so I stay all over. I born my 1st issue there, 1991. My 2nd issue there 1993, my 4th issue there 1996. Come 2000 I born my last child. So, I stay there 17 good years in Cameroon. After 4 years I left Mutengene and lived at Duala. I go to Cameroon 13 February 1990. The thing that make me go to Cameroon is because of the hardship and the economy of Nigeria. So, exchange was so poor, the exchange of Naira and Francs was so poor. So, I have to go and look for higher rate. That is what made me go to Cameroon. I decided to go by myself, because it is the only country that is very close to me. That is the reason why I went to Cameroon. I wanted to travel from Cameroon to Holland, so I made my 1st trip to Holland in 1997, with my senior brother. So unfortunately, my own Visa didn't go through, so I was repatriated back to Cameroon. So, I stay in Cameroon there is no other thing for me to do.¹⁵⁶⁶

Casmen, referencing his goal of migrating to Holland, shows that for some in the 1980s, Cameroun had become a mere waypoint in broader Igbo migration to Europe, Malaysia, and North America. While Cameroun still offered all the abundant economic opportunities it had in decades prior, it could not compete with the appeal of locales outside Africa. Still being denied a visa to Holland

¹⁵⁶⁴Takougang, "The Demise of Biya's New Deal in Cameroon, 1982-1992," 99.

¹⁵⁶⁵Angwafo, *Cameroons Predicaments*, 69.

¹⁵⁶⁶Casmen Ihekweba, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhetteaforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

did not detour Casmen, and like many other traders, he was not only able to find success in Cameroun but also raise a family.

Nigerians, specifically the Igbo, have continued until recently to make West Cameroon their home. Igbo remained in Cameroon under Ahidjo, as the country transitioned from a federal republic to an autocratic dictatorship. Igbos remained in Cameroon as Paul Biya orchestrated and solidified his coup in 1982.¹⁵⁶⁷ Igbo stayed through the tumultuous 1990s, where Biya's regime came under intense opposition. Igbos remain as present during the present Ambazonia war for independence. Through as the war has escalated, many have sought refuge in their natal villages.

The Anglophone Crisis, which has since 2016 ballooned into a full-blown Civil War, is rooted in the decisions made before and following reunification.¹⁵⁶⁸ Since 1961, Anglophones have felt marginalized, and ostracized by Francophone authoritarianism.¹⁵⁶⁹ In the 1960s, West Cameroon, Ahidjo, was able to use similar political tactics, promoting lesser challengers to subdue his real rivals, which had proven successful in cementing his power in Cameroun.¹⁵⁷⁰ Anglophone Cameroonians are fighting to establish Ambazonia. Upwards of 30,000 documented refugees have found shelter in Cross River State, Nigeria.¹⁵⁷¹ The latter are Cameroonians with no direct familial attachment to Nigeria. Uncounted among these refugees are Igbos, who returned home to their natal villages to wait out the war.¹⁵⁷² I completed my fieldwork in Nigeria in 2018 and was able to

¹⁵⁶⁷ Casmen Ihekweba, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhetteaforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

¹⁵⁶⁸ "Cameroon Teachers, Lawyers Strike in Battle for English," 5 December 2016, *Aljazeera News*, aljazeera.com, [accessed 5 December 2016].

¹⁵⁶⁹ Cameroon Teachers, Lawyers Strike in Battle for English," 5 December 2016, *Aljazeera News*, aljazeera.com, [accessed 5 December 2016].

¹⁵⁷⁰ J.F. Bayart, "The Neutralisation of Anglophone Cameroon," in *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon under Ahmadu Ahidjo*, eds. Richard Joseph, (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978), 84.

¹⁵⁷¹ Cameroon Teachers, Lawyers Strike in Battle for English," 5 December 2016, *Aljazeera News*, aljazeera.com, [accessed 5 December 2016].

¹⁵⁷² Casmen Ihekweba, *Oral Interview: Umunumo Ihhetteaforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

speak with dozens of Igbo migrants who had returned home because of the conflict. In natal villages, they had to adjust to a new life, which for many, was alien. It was common for them to recount the shock and dismay at the lack of running water and power, which are spotty in Nigeria but consistent in Cameroon.¹⁵⁷³

Through the decades Igbos chose to remain in Cameroon for two interconnected reasons. The first is purely economic. It was and remains less cumbersome to establish oneself in Cameroon economically. Concurrently, Cameroon has been a refuge from the social and political upheavals which routinely rocked Nigeria. Cameroon may not be a bastion of democracy, but until 1999, Nigeria's series of military coups made life increasingly difficult. Comparatively, Cameroon has only suffered under two dictators.

“Igbo Migration, Entrepreneurship and the Creation of the Igbo Scare” centered and narrated the experience of Igbo traders, migrants, and entrepreneurs who lived between Nigeria and Cameroon. This research has shown that Igbos and Ibibios held a significant presence in Cameroon, beginning in 1916. The reunification of Cameroon in 1961, marginalized the Igbo narrative within Cameroon history. Igbo migrants moved from the centralized economic bogeyperson to periphery actors; while the “Anglophone Problem,” moved to the center. Only recently have in-depth studies begun to bring to life the experience of Igbo migrants in Cameroon, Ghana, and Fernando Po. I hope that this work adds to this scholarly growth. Acholonu, in *Look at Imo*, reflected on the impetus of men and women from Imo State to seek fortunes elsewhere in the following statement that embodies many of the experiences narrated throughout the dissertation:

¹⁵⁷³ Casmen Ihekweba, *Oral Interview: Umununo Ihheteeforukwu in Ahiazu Mbaise*, James K. Blackwell, Jr, 11 September 2018.

There is no part of Nigeria where indigenes of Imo State do not live today. Why? Certainly, the reason is not exactly for love of adventure but obviously to earn a living¹⁵⁷⁴

¹⁵⁷⁴Acholonu, Look at Imo State, 16.

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